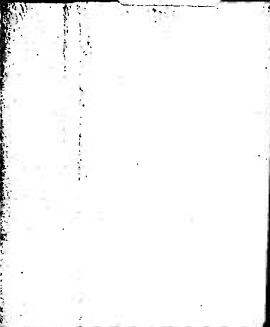


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XIX.

# JOHANNINE WRITINGS

BY THE REVEREND

A. NAIRNE, D.D.

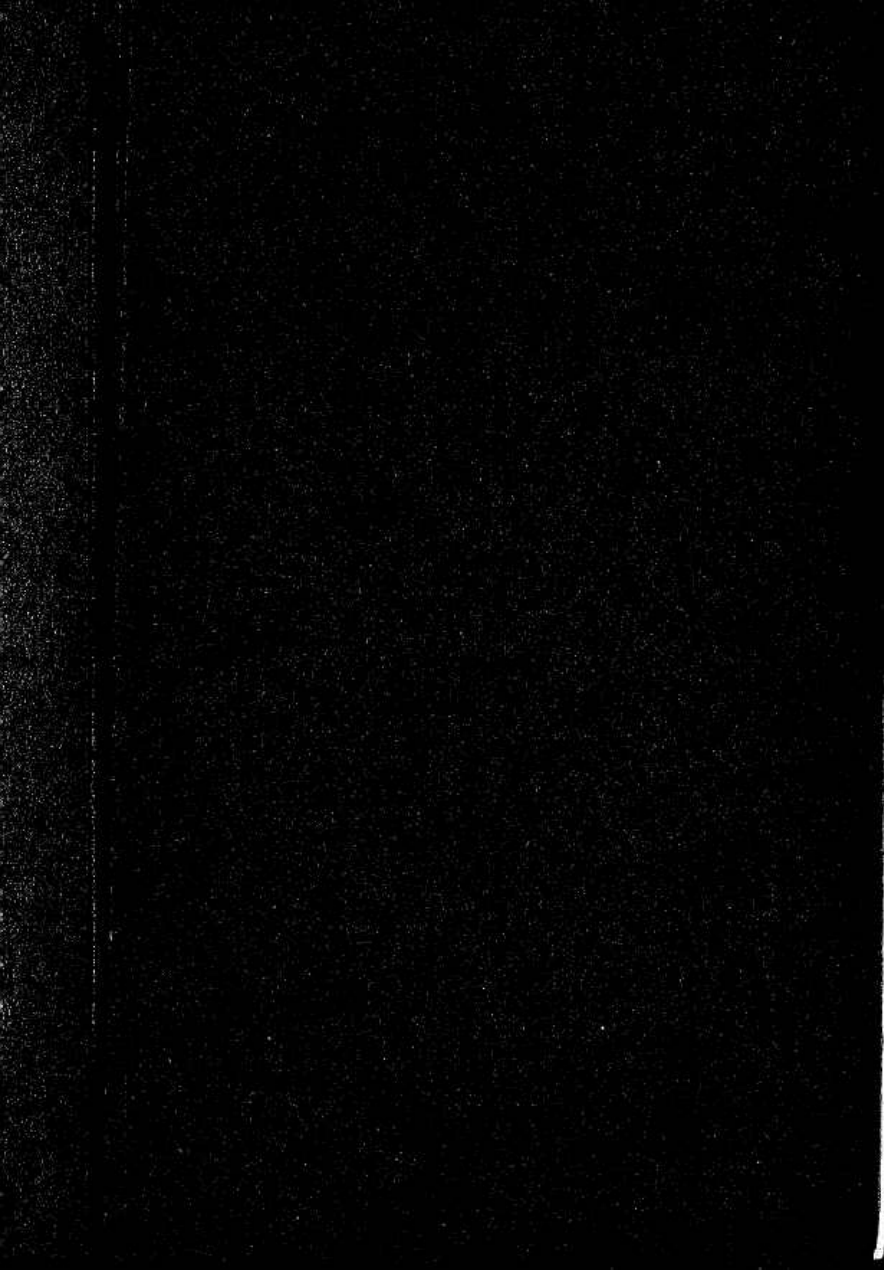
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# JOHANNINE V

BY THE REVEREND

A. NAIRNE,

CANON OF CHESTER

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# WRITINGS

REVEREND

NE, D.D.

*per.*

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MEMORANDUM

TO : MR.

ZERABEL COACHING

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## PREFACE.

In these lectures certain aspects only of the Johannine doctrine are selected, and critical problems are but glanced at. My own view, which I confess is still but dim, of the origin and composition of the books emerges as the argument proceeds, but it may fairly be objected that I have not offered any other view for comparison. I wish to remedy that defect by printing here a letter from Dr. Murray, Master of Selwyn College, who kindly read my proof sheets, and spent such pains upon them as I cannot sufficiently thank him for. He corrected many errors in detail and finally wrote as follows :

“ While my mind is still on the subject I must try to put into shape some of my difficulties with regard to your ‘disciple of the disciple’ theory for S. John, both Gospel and First Epistle. Your position is so much the position of modern scholarship that I feel it important to do full justice to it. But it entirely fails to satisfy me.

The reviewer of Latimer Jackson’s *The problem of the Fourth Gospel in The Challenge* (July 5) rules out of court as incompetent all

critics 'who urge that most fatuous alternative either history or forgery' in dealing with this Gospel, but he makes no attempt to relieve their difficulties. You at least try to suggest an alternative hypothesis.

With regard to the Epistle you say 'The composition to an extent we need not define may be due to some pupil' (p. 57).

With regard to the Gospel 'Some later Plato devoted to the memory of this Socrates has commemorated his master in a perfectly free romantic set of compositions, as faithfully as Plato but as daringly' (p. 103).

I am sorry you should be content to be so vague about the Epistle. That surely is a composition with a singular unity and compactness of structure, bearing, if any writing in existence does, the stamp of a single mind throughout. It is surely *either* a perfectly free romantic composition *or* the direct utterance of a 'pastoral heart' meeting with acknowledged authority the difficulties of his beloved flock. His 'little children.' Do notice the uniqueness and significance of that recurrent title. Could a 'romancer' have invented it?

Notice also another small but very significant point, the writer's habitual use of *ἐκεῖνος* and from time to time *αὐτός* for Jesus without further definition. No other writer in the New Testament has it. It is surely supremely natural on the lips

of 'the Beloved Disciple.' It would savour of affectation on the lips of any one else.

It is true that 'the Pastoral' has no direct address. But we cannot doubt that it was addressed to a definite congregation, or set of congregations, and therefore, as you I think believe, in the lifetime of the Beloved Disciple.

If so, it is surely difficult to put the composition of the Gospel into the period after his death. And yet, the man who acted Plato to this Socrates could hardly have commemorated his master in a set of perfectly free romantic compositions in his lifetime.

I assume, by the way, that you do mean that 'John' is Socrates in this case, and the author of the Gospel is Plato; in spite of the fact that the Gospel is entirely devoted to the Revelation of 'the WORD,' and in no sense to the exposition of a truth which is to redound to the glory of the Beloved Disciple, whose name is carefully concealed.

Of course there is a sense in which S. John acts the part of Plato with the Synoptists as Xenophon to Christ as Socrates: but you would, I imagine, find it difficult to believe that the Beloved Disciple himself was capable of indulging in perfectly free romantic composition in what purports to be an historical document.

Can a man put the exact antithesis to the theory of free romance into stronger

words than these : ' That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands handled concerning the word of The Life, declare we ' ?

I am afraid I share F. D. Maurice's suspicions of an ' ideal world ' half way between the world of sense and the world of spirit; and my reading of the ' sacramental principle ' is not satisfied by any attempts to minimise the importance of the outward and visible sign—(Meredith's insistence on ' Earth ' proves him to be from my point of view a sound ' sacramentalist. ') And I find it hard to conceive a more complete denial of ' Jesus Christ come and coming in flesh ' than the position Loisy takes ; who is held up by the reviewer in the Challenge as the ideal interpreter of S. John !

I am still browsing on F. D. Maurice's sermons on the Gospel of S. John. His choice of this method of exposition had at least the merit of keeping him continuously in touch with human life. And he is helping me to realise afresh how intensely practical a thing the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is.

I cannot help feeling that there is a dividing line in our apprehension of the whole book according as we find in ' Logos ' primarily the thought of ' Reason, ' or the thought of ' utterance. '

You start from the Greek side, with 'Logos' as 'Reason,' and find in the Prologue a set of 'ideas' as the key to the history which is to follow including the idea of the ever self-imparting divinity of the 'Logos.' I start from the Hebrew side, Logos as 'Word,' Memra, the utterance of God, the living bond between God and man, who comes into the world not primarily to bear witness to Himself, or His own Divinity, but to the Father. As such He is 'the Way,' 'the Truth' and 'the Life' for the whole race of man, and for the whole Universe. But these are not vast 'impersonal' abstractions, but living symbols of the different functions which He performs in linking us to the Father, in Conscience, Mind, Heart (affection, feeling, emotion).

Try for instance to read the Gospel as describing the life of a Man who has found God, and is striving to draw His fellow men up into the same communion.

There are two sides of the Gospel which have to be taken into account if you are to test the hypothesis of 'free romantic composition.'

The first is its record of 'events,' and the second 'the discourses.'

Now Lightfoot and Westcott devoted a great deal of time to the study of the first of these two sides, and they have made it abundantly clear that judged by every 'objective' test its claim to embody direct

historical reminiscences is indefeasible, both from its archaeological accuracy and by its revelation of personal character. These features run through the whole narrative, and we may safely say were out of the reach of any 'Romancer.'

Of course there are difficulties. Take the story of Lazarus which you refer to again and again. Some of these come from within the story itself; chiefly, what is to us the stupendous character of the 'mighty deed,' bringing back to life the four days' dead.

Some are due simply to our ignorance.

How could any Evangelist who knew the story fail to record it? How could any of our Evangelists fail to have been familiar with it?

You suggest on the occasion of your first reference to the story that there might have been some suspicion in the minds of those who knew, as to whether Lazarus had been really dead, and this sealed the lips of the Synoptists.

When you come to the story a second time you think it a point in favour of 'the free romantic' theory that it would make it easier to regard the whole story as imaginative. It can be taken out of the series of incidents that depend on direct personal testimony.

Now judged by Lightfoot's criteria, the narrative is singularly full of truth to detail

in its delineations of personal character, *e.g.*, S. Thomas, Martha and Mary. And it contains personal traits in our Lord, both in characteristic utterances, and in the wonderfully significant touch 'Jesus wept'; 'wept' as a prelude to what to a miracle monger would be the supreme triumph; which would seem at least to take the story out of the category of fiction.

Now if we believe that the root of the whole matter lies in the revelation 'I am the Resurrection and the Life, and that that revelation is in accordance with the fact, there is nothing abnormal in this manifestation of His power in order to bring the fact out into human consciousness. And I cannot say that it makes 'no difference' whether it actually happened, or whether an imaginative disciple thought it would have been very instructive if it had.

On this side of the Gospel story, I cannot see any third alternative between 'fact' and 'myth' or 'fable.'

So far as the silence of the Synoptists is concerned I am content not to know. But if 'guessing' can help, I might suggest that, as S. John tells us, 'the Jews sought to kill Lazarus.' There might therefore be special reasons why during the formative period of the Synoptic Tradition (the early years of Apostolic preaching at Jerusalem) no special stress was laid upon this particular sign.

It was not regarded as something 'out of the way' for the Christ to have done. They were content with quite general statements, 'The dead are raised,' and did not multiply instances.

The case is different with the 'discourses.' You do plead that at least in some cases, in fact 'often,' 'He does give the very words.'

This of course gives up the case for 'free romantic compositions' at least in the bulk of the discourses. If they are 'variations on a theme' 'the theme' at least is the Master's own.

Here we are up against a real problem. I think it is clear that in some instances the Evangelist carries on the thought contained in the Word of the Lord that he has recorded, with reflections of his own, and that it is not at all easy to say where the record ends and the reflection begins. These cases want to be carefully examined and tested one by one before we can reach a final solution with regard to them.

I would only say (1) the fact that the language of the Prologue is not incorporated in or repeated by the words of the Lord, is so far a good sign, and (2) the phenomenon is intensely natural, indeed inevitable, if we have the narrative as it shaped itself in the mind of a disciple who had lived with the words for a lifetime. It would be a very



different matter in the case of someone who came to the Divine utterances 'fresh.'

It is just past time. But I think I have fairly 'liberated my soul' on the matter, and need not wait to treat of the few points of detail that I had marked for further discussion."

The analogy of Plato and Socrates was used in the lectures (p. 103) to illustrate a view we might possibly be obliged to take, not the view preferred, of p. 60; so I am glad to agree with part of Dr. Murray's criticism. "A perfectly free romantic set of compositions" was a rash expression which I have expunged from the published text. "Faithfully" was deliberately written, for I follow Professor Burnet in believing the Socrates of Plato to be the real Socrates, and the great Platonic doctrines to be Socrates' own doctrines (see Burnet's *Greek Philosophy from Thales to Plato*, his edition of the *Phaedo* and his lecture on *Socrates and the Soul*). I would be loth to think of S. John as a Plato to our Lord as Socrates: Socrates and S. John are in their several spheres prophets of One far greater than themselves.

Besides Dr. Murray's criticisms of which the value is so evident, I have had comments from Canon Grensted, the Vicar of Melling. He heard the lectures, talked with me afterwards, and wrote three letters, very acute and full of learning all his own. His long

study of early astronomy and symbolism has led him to recognise Alexandrine influence in the Apocalypse, especially in Rev. xii, and to some extent in the Gospel. The greater part of his letters are too technical to be quoted here (he had an article on the subject in *The Interpreter*, October, 1911); but the following passages will I think be of interest :

“My view is that S. John’s *Gospel* is really a book compounded from what was originally what we should call now a series of *Sermons*.

It has acquired its present form, I think, by *long repetition* and then *at last* was fused together and written down.

I picture to myself something happening like the statement of a philosophical system in Bishop Butler’s *Sermons on Human Nature*. ‘*Sermons*’ is *one* stage. His *Analogy*, which followed, I think grew up out of other sermons in much the same way and has come into our hands in *stage two*.

I regard as evidence the apparent *usage* of incidents and discourses in a way their *original* application is diverse from, the shortest illustration of this being S. John xx, 29 where the words as *Jesus said* them have an application to Thomas, as the preacher *records* them to an Ephesian congregation, and a *different* application. So I hold that S. John iii, 1., etc., though a *perfect* baptismal *discourse* does not *primarily* refer to any external ordinance of baptism. Likewise S. John vii, 59 is a eucharistic *discourse*, but its

original meaning and teaching is not about the Eucharist at all, but it all dwells on the plane of the eternal; and these are samples.

Of course S. John viii, 1-11 is an intrusion. Also S. John xxi is not a part of the *Gospel* at all but an independent annex. Still xxi, 24, *καὶ γράψας ταῦτα*, is very strong.

“Now about the Apocalypse. Can we not infer a *personality* in an *environment*, thinking back from ‘the Apocalypse’ to ‘the seer’: and does not Alexandria with all we know of its culture and literature give us exactly that we seek? Patmos was the mere *exile*, not the *home* of the *mind*. If Clement of Alexandria could travel from Athens to Alexandria and then go to Palestine, all before A.D. 220, *travels* for the Apocalyptic seer are all thinkable. And if Alexandria were the home of the fullest culture, there also would be the deepest impression made.

“It seems to me that the value of all this reference [to astronomy, symbolism, syncretism] is that it establishes *Alexandria* as the *mental* ‘locus standi’ of the writer, and makes the Apocalypse take its place with Sirach, Wisdom, Philo, Hebrews, etc., in a chain of Alexandrine thought.

“[In Egypt] we find astronomy and religion and mythology *mixed up*. And this *type of thinking* is what we find in the Apocalypse: only there the astronomy and mythology has become a *language* and what

it expresses is Christianity. Out of the tangle Christianity, with the Logos, etc., emerges on the plane of the eternal.

I feel *sure* we have to do with a writer who *did* see visions. I have had in my own life one such experience. I will not dwell on it here, but I recognise the awful shock of its *impact*, Rev. i, 17, and I understand that verse as I never did before. It is *not* the creation of a mere literary artist; it is a *true* record of an experience. Why not? See II Cor. xii, 1-4. I *know* my own was built up of impressions already in the mind, I can disentangle them. So I see the Apocalyptic writer's *sources* in the earlier writings of the Bible, and in the pagan mythologies that surrounded him.

“What we have got to do is to imagine ourselves capable of seeing visions, with an earnest Christian Faith, dreaming away in an Alexandrian temple, hard by the University where a professor is lecturing on say geometry, and then going home to argue with a friend who has just been reading Philo and to discuss with him a chapter in the Septuagint: and with tremendously earnest views as to the Utopia of Isaiah, the visions of Daniel, and the then political tendency of the age as set forth in Roman Imperial rule and its relationship to the rule of the Eternal Christ.

Was John the son of Zebedee such a man?

But such a man as this might be his disciple, and his Christianity might be absolutely derived at Ephesus from the preaching of S. John, and he might be one of that band of Elders who surrounded the old man in the weakness of age, and so recorded in his own way the *Johannine Creed*, and have been one who lovingly accepted the blessing of S. John xx, 29.

To record the faith in *this way* would have been to become all things to all men to gain some, to talk pagan jargon to the pagans because *his* soul reached out to the Eternal in such mythological visions. Just as in Rev. ii, 7 we have 'the tree of life' to the Ephesians because Ephesians had been from childhood accustomed to regard vegetable symbolism as an avenue of worship."

This is as much a correction as a confirmation of my view of the functions of S. John's "pupil." But I quote Canon Grensted simply because he is, to me at any rate, so very interesting. I venture to add that his own remarkable and touching "experience" does, in my judgment, illustrate the reality of the Johannine vision. It is possible that a special line of study has led him to exaggerate the traces of Alexandrine influence. But his opinions are fortified by a mass of laboriously collected facts; he has a right to hold opinions; and even where they are not wholly new he puts them in a fresh and arresting manner.

While writing this Preface I have come across an article in *The Church Quarterly*, for October, 1880, on "Christian imaginations of heaven," from which I should like to quote a few lines in defence of what I have said (p. 95 ff.) on the "penal imagery" of the Apocalypse :

"The earlier creeds set forth the Life everlasting, and do not set forth the everlasting Fire, though no Christian of their day, so far as we know, dared to deny it. There is a reticence ; and it is certainly observable in the popular symbolic ornamentation used by the Primitive Church as distinguished from later Mediaeval work . . . . Certain it is that, though the presence of the Lord in glory with saints is very early represented, both in sepulchral decoration, and in the larger Basilicas, and though He is in about 400 years surrounded by the mystic splendours of the Apocalypse, there is no contrasted Inferno that we know of for twice that time and its introduction is an archaeological or artistic landmark for the entrance of Church History on its Mediaeval stage. No 'painted Hell' existed that we know of earlier than the eleventh or twelfth century mosaics of Torcello ; nor is any such representation on record, except the painting which Methodius is said to have executed to stimulate the emotional aestheticism of a certain King Bogoris of Bulgaria. But at whatever time

men ceased to separate the ideas of Eternal Happiness from the dark relief of Eternal Pain, they had introduced the latter by the date of the early Venetian mosaics. Florence repeated the lesson in S. Giovanni, and the illuminated service-books soon carried it all over the world . . . . The terrors of the soul are, in fact, ethnic, or heathen, or common to all souls: all the consolations belong to the Faith."

And now bringing this long Preface to an end, I thank the Liverpool Diocesan Board of Theology for allowing me to prefix so much additional matter. I would also express my gratitude to the Lord Bishop of Liverpool, the Chancellor of the Diocese, Canon J. T. Mitchell, the Rector of Liverpool, and all the clergy of S. Nicholas, for many kindnesses during the three years in which I have had the honour of lecturing: also to Messrs. J. A. Thompson and Co., the printers, who in spite of increasing difficulties of war have upheld the tradition of their craft, and to whose patience and courtesy I owe much.

A. NAIRNE.

Chester, *August*, 1918.

P.S.—Dr. Murray has drawn attention in his letter to Lightfoot's defence of "The authenticity and genuineness of St. John's Gospel" in "Biblical Essays" (Macmillan, 1893). I would also add to the list of Books at the end of these lectures *The historical character of St. John's Gospel* by the Dean of Wells (Longman's, 7d.)

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# *The Johannine Writings.*

## SYLLABUS.

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### LECTURE I.—THE GOSPEL.

Johannine doctrine consonant with the mind of the present generation, as illuminating the cloud of war (*Apocalypse*), the mystery of Christ's person (*Gospel*), the brotherhood of men (*Epistle*); and as revealing heaven within rather than beyond civilisation, quietism rather than eschatology.

The three books of the Ephesian canon and the three names therewith connected: John, the Elder, the Disciple whom Jesus loved. Do these names indicate S. John the Apostle? We may consider him author if not writer of the Ephesian Gospel, a Gospel which truly interprets trustworthy tradition.

Gospel, Epistles, Apocalypse: this, the order of the New Testament in its final form, will be followed in these lectures. It corresponds with the recent development of our theology: Christ, humanity, trial.

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The prologue, in which the governing ideas and phrases are brought vitally together, sets the key of the Gospel. Then the argument proceeds with a triple interwoven harmony: history, theology, naiveté. And in

the last discourses (xiii.—xvii.) the sketch of the prologue is completed.

The history is the sojourn of our Lord in Galilee and Jerusalem. It is a drama manifesting purpose, reason, way; victory through dying. It is a revelation of light not quenched by darkness, of reality through appearance, of truth through symbol. It is life, abundant and profound. What faithfulness to fact? Illustration from raising of Lazarus.

The theology is the movement of the Word from and to God. The Word moves with all that is His, but in concentric circles of effectual grace: every man, those who believe, those who know; through Jesus Christ. Hence difficult antitheses: the Master and disciples—the Word and the ages; process in time—eternal life. Reconciliation by the sacramental principle.

The naïveté appears in the very simple language in which all is expressed. But there is more than a habit of language here. Such names as Father and Paraclete belong to the homely intimate particular affection which unites all the persons of the Saviour's circle and vivifies abstractions. The life of Jesus is the metaphysics of Christ.

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Three stages in criticism of this Gospel: as proving exclusive divinity; as therefore

late development ; as setting forth the “ one Christ, not by conversion of the godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.”

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## LECTURE II.—THE EPISTLES.

The second and third are pastoral letters from “ the Elder ” : the first, connected with the Gospel by a prologue, applies the gospel doctrine of incarnation and sacrifice to the practical life of the brotherhood.

The background seems to lie apart from the western development of which we read in Acts and Paul ; *fallentis semita vitæ*, a retired apostolate.

And, in time, shews transition from apostolic inauguration :

Conversion passes into state of salvation ; doctrine of forgiveness and gradual cleansing.

The rule of charity is worked out for a settled community in which the poorer brethren need frequent relief ; the first treatise on Christian economics.

The hope of Christ’s advent, now long delayed, is more thoughtfully, less imaginatively stated ; manifestation rather than coming.

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But there is no diminishing of the ideal of sinlessness, the heroism of love, or the certainty of final perfection. Deepened sincerity, more exact truth, is demanded. Precepts are carried back to divine principles. The paradoxical—or sacramental—truth of the incarnation of the Word is insisted upon as against the false spirit of denial and the idols of threatening heresy.

This epistle also is a pastoral. It does not deal directly with the world, already fiercely hostile. The mystery of the evil one. The fire of saving love.

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### LECTURE III.—THE APOCALYPSE.

The welcome of the Gentiles (*Paul*), the security of Roman law and order (*Acts*): such hope of quiet progress disappointed in later books of New Testament, and in the Apocalypse this disappointment culminates.

The peace of the Church proved in trial, within stern realities the grander reality.

The liturgic character of the Apocalypse. As in Gospel the spirit of sacramental worship is reasserted: when violence and blasphemy dominate on earth, the throne of God and of the Lamb are revealed in heaven.

The ideal of Christ's humility. The Lion of Judah is the Lamb of God, and the slain Lamb. Victory is still through defeat and death.

For death is an act and not the end of life. The martyrs and the sealed saints, and the communion of saints innumerable.

Nor may this world be despaired of, into which the City of God shall at last descend.

But when comes that At last? The repeated delays in the vision; the final sentences are prayer. "Reality is always misrepresented by those who wish to make it lead up to a conclusion; God alone may do that." (*Flaubert*).

Thus the Apocalypse, for all its frank and antique imagery, refines (like Gospel and Epistle) on the traditional hope of the advent. Parts of the imagery offended the early church, and the book was but cautiously admitted into the canon, to express the mind of the whole church magnificently rather than to establish prosaically the peculiarities of its long disputed author.





## LECTURE I.

### THE GOSPEL.

The New Testament is a unity. The doctrine of Christ and salvation pervades the whole. Yet the books fall into distinct groups, and the one doctrine is presented from different points of view, and as times and circumstances change, now one and now another of these views predominates. While the divinity of Christ and the efficacy of his atonement were taken for granted, and while on the other hand, the great question was, How does a man receive the benefit of that atoning act?, S. Paul's epistles were of the first interest. Then criticism arose, a process which was stimulated by a strongly felt need to be sure about Christ himself, whether or no he be more than man, whether his mission was to save by teaching and example, or by some profounder influence. Thus attention was drawn back to the three Gospels which told the story of the Galilean life. With these Gospels S. Paul's epistles were compared, no longer to supply a scheme of salvation but to check the gospel reminiscences by these still earlier records of the impression

made upon the converted Pharisee, and to illustrate the manner in which a burning faith and a keen intellect could, at the remove of one stage from the Galilean experience, develop the recollection of Jesus the teacher into a doctrine of Christ the pre-existent Son of God.

Then again this "rationalistic" criticism gave place to another view. The same documents were the object of this view. But the Jewish antecedents now became the key to their interpretation. In the Galilean Gospels the main idea was found to be the expected kingdom of God. Our Lord's unique position was recognised in his proclamation that this kingdom was now immediately at hand. The confession of S. Peter, "Thou art the Christ," explained the impression he had made, the awe and wonder with which he was from the first surrounded. Before the high priest our Lord himself claimed to be the Christ, and for that claim he died. His death seemed for three days to falsify the claim. The resurrection established it.

These new "apocalyptic" critics, as they have been called, are no longer rationalists. They do not "explain" mysterious things. How Christ rose, they do not pretend to tell. That the resurrection is the great fact from which the next stage of history begins, they hold to be clear from the records. For, once admit the kingdom and the Christ-

hood as the key, then the record becomes evidently consistent as a whole; it is a record of wonderful events which do pass understanding, but it is real history. Of course historical problems, critical difficulties remain, especially in details. But these are approached in a new spirit. The eternal is recognised as breaking in with inexplicable might. The element of wonder resumes power. And in particular the confidence in steady progress, the quiet guiding of the Spirit into all the truth, is crossed by the startling "apocalyptic" expectation of sudden interruptions, of outpourings of the Spirit even in blood and fire.

To which too a startling moral earnestness is seen to answer. The harder sayings of our Lord about treasure in heaven, taking no thought for the morrow, leaving all to follow, finding life in losing it, come with more absolute appeal. Something more heroic is found to be of the essence of the gospel than the prudence of civilisation recommends. We really are to have our home in heaven and to pass with detachment through the changes and chances of this world. This is just the temper in which Archbishop Mercier wrote his pastoral letter to his martyred flock in Belgium. The war has fallen upon the civilised world in true apocalyptic fashion. And it might be regarded as providential in the exactest sense that just before this fiery trial began,

the study of the Gospels had reached a point from which the very consolation and encouragement required in such a visitation might be received by Christ's people as their inheritance.

Yet this has not quite happened. The war has affected faith in various ways. In some hearts it has obscured it for a while. Some it has driven into superstition. Generally however it has revived faith; it has been a real outpouring of Spirit. The apocalyptic impulse has been felt. Material interests have proved weaker than ideas. Life has been laid down so willingly that we stand amazed at the witness which men and women of all sorts and conditions have borne to eternal principles, to "the duty of upholding the preciousness of national life even at the cost of individual life, awful as that is,"\* and (consciously or unconsciously) to that intenser affection which our Lord expressed in the words, "For my sake and the gospel's." And yet the temper that has been aroused is not on the whole characteristically apocalyptic. Men are determined to save civilisation, not to supersede it; to be practical and patient in reform by thinking things out, not to belittle intellect; to press from imaginative forms in theology to plain truth itself, not to return to the bold imagery which fitted the early preaching of the kingdom of heaven.

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\* F. D. Maurice: *The Kingdom of Christ*, II, iv.

and they are less and less inclined to look forward merely to perfection in future time, more set upon finding eternal peace even in the midst of tumult, and to realise eternal goodness at once and gradually even by means of existing sadness and disappointment. This is quietism instead of eschatology. It is the distinctive doctrine of S. John. We are entering upon a period in which those books of the New Testament which bear the name of S. John will come specially near to us.

These books fall into three groups: the Gospel, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse. The seer of the Apocalypse gives his name as John. The second and third Epistles are from "the presbyter." The Gospel seems to be written by an unnamed person who has thus preserved the teaching of "the disciple whom Jesus loved." And the first Epistle is so evidently linked with the Gospel that it too must have the beloved disciple as its author though not as its actual writer. From Irenaeus (born c. 130 A.D.), onwards the tradition holds that John, the presbyter, and the beloved disciple are designations of one and the same John, namely the apostle, the son of Zebedee, who died at Ephesus later than 100 A.D., having long been bishop there. There were doubts indeed about the second and third Epistles and the Apocalypse, and the tradition as a whole cannot easily be traced before

Irenaeus. I do not propose to go at all thoroughly into these critical questions, which are very complicated. As we go on a fairly safe way through the maze will I hope shew itself. In the meantime let it suffice to premise that all these books are connected with Ephesus and form together an "Ephesian Gospel," and that this Gospel truly interprets a traditional theology which we may trust. I shall speak freely of S. John as "author," without stopping to discuss the accuracy of this, our familiar habit.

The Apocalypse is perhaps the earliest of these books. But we will take them in the order of our English Bible. So they have generally stood since they were collected into a complete Bible, and so they answer to that development of theology in recent years which has issued, as I believe, in a revived desire to be taught by S. John. First came the questions about Christ, his manhood and his godhead, and to these questions the Gospel brings its answer. Then arose that "religious perception of our time," so well described by Tolstoy, as "the consciousness that our well-being, both material and spiritual, individual and collective, temporal and eternal, lies in the growth of brotherhood among all men—in their loving harmony with one another" (*What is Art?*). This consciousness has not only affected political and economical practice

and roused a sincere longing for social reforms, it has also re-acted on our thought about the person of Christ; and here is the twofold theme of the first Epistle of S. John. And now the war has come upon us, a fiery trial to test and establish faith, just as the Apocalypse sprang from a fiery trial at the end of the apostolic age, out of which the faith emerged purified and indefectible.

The Gospel opens with a prologue which sets the key of the whole. In the divine Word, the reason and creative expression of the unseen God, all that has being is life. This universal life is the light by which man is capable of receiving supreme revelation. The facts of life as it actually goes on are indeed dark, but the light is victorious over darkness. The light never disappears, nor is any man without the light. This light is the subject of the history about to be told, which begins with the mission of John the Baptist. But he was not himself the light. He but bore witness to another who actually was, at the time of John's mission, coming into the world and was—what mystery of abstract and concrete, of personality as we now say—that light. This light was always in the world which he as Word had ordered, but the world knew him not. The place and faith and nation which had been prepared for his manifestation, knew him not. Some however did receive him and to these

he gave authority by spiritual birth to become children of God. In simplest manner, by the homely affections of common manhood, his disciples have now known him as a person, like themselves and yet supreme above all. The grace and truth, the ideal of holy manhood was his, and because he never fell short of the fulness of that ideal they recognised in him the one complete manifestation of the glory of God. In the sacrament of real manhood the real godhead has been shewn; simply, profoundly, as in the relation of son to father, a relation which all can understand. John led the way in this recognition. The disciples all shared it in due time for what they perceived in him they partook of. For here was divine influence working in human intercourse, the kindly grace and truth of the Christ who is man's brother Jesus, no longer the external impersonal law of ancestral Jewish churchmanship. Under that law it was possible to acquiesce in what is undoubtedly and unchangeably true, that no man has ever seen God; yet now that truth takes on a new significance; here in this Master the one and only perfect friend, who ever rests in the bosom of the divine Father, who is himself divine, the invisible godhead is revealed.

This prologue sets forth the idea of the history which is to follow, the idea of the sanctity of all life summed up in the incarnate



Word from whom it proceeds, the idea of his ever self-imparting divinity, the promise that in common scenes and homely events eternal grandeur will be continually manifest : and, with all this, the forewarning that the manifestation will be costly ; in this dark world the light survives with difficulty ; victory will be tragic, but there shall be victory.

The prologue sets the key. Having brooded over the prologue the reader will enter sympathetically upon the Gospel. In his sympathy there will be reverence, wonder. He will expect to find a divine glory breaking through the use and wont of ordinary events, not only in the person of the Lord but also in the characters with whom the Lord is involved: the mystery will be ubiquitous. And there will be in his sympathy something of the freedom yet reticence with which we read serious poetry. He will not ask importunate questions. He will abandon himself to the influence of a larger experience than his own, trusting its choice of presentation of the whole truth though he does not always understand its variations from what he has been accustomed to consider truth in detail. Thus he will set forth to follow the argument.

That argument proceeds with a triple interwoven harmony : a history is narrated, a theology is simultaneously educed, and the whole is invested with a particular character by the naiveté of thought and language

with which all is expressed. The argument is the argument of a drama. The last scenes are the passion and death of the Lord, and then the victory of his resurrection. But before these scenes are opened there is a pause. The pause is occupied by the discourses of the Lord with his disciples at the last supper. Here the thoughts of the prologue are again presented, and now completely. There the Word incarnate was announced: here the issues of incarnation are shewn forth for the consolation of all disciples through all time. Once more the person expands or intensifies into what seems an abstraction—"I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus the master lord and friend resumes the majesty of the all pervading Word. But now this very majesty will be a more intimate union. The affection established by companionship will be eternalised in the mission of the Paraclete. The unity of man with the Father will be restored through the Son.

The history is the sojourn of our Lord in Galilee and Jerusalem. Notice how much of his time is spent in Galilee. Till the end of chapter vi, the second passover, we might say that the main interest is still in Galilee. When he comes from Galilee to Jerusalem the people of Jerusalem and the high priests regard him as a Galilean. In this Gospel the promise of the young man at the sepulchre

(Mark xvi, 7), "He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you," is satisfied not as in S. Matthew by a brief sentence, but by a beautiful episode (xxi) in which as it were the Master and his disciples come home again. In this Gospel as in the synoptists Galilee is home: this is not contradicted but illustrated by the saying in iv, 44, "For Jesus himself testified that a prophet hath no honour in his own country." Here is an instance of what again and again appears when we read this Gospel for ourselves, that its difference from the synoptic Gospels may be exaggerated. I am inclined to doubt whether another difference, its allegorical colour, has not been exaggerated, the allegoric number of the seven miracles, their resemblance, with heightening, to corresponding synoptic miracles, and so on. This resemblance is not always quite naturally made out. The heightening is more easily recognised to be an ascent within the drama itself, culminating in the raising of Lazarus, or rather in the Lord's own resurrection. The number seven is got by separating the walking on the sea from the feeding of the five thousand, whereas these belong to one another and express the evangelist's sense of the eternal breaking through the visible with peculiar abundance at this turning point in the action. Symbol—or to use the evangelist's own word, sign—is a more fitting term

to apply to his design than allegory. Allegories may often be extracted from literary works which have a great plan: how far the authors of such works valued allegory is doubtful. When Clement of Alexandria (repeating earlier tradition) called this a "spiritual" Gospel, he probably did mean allegorical and would have agreed with Origen that there are many statements in it which are not literally true: but it is far from certain that the author would have approved. Allegory is generally the prosaic explanation of the later reader. The author, living in the history which he creates anew, sees all that happens as "symbol." And symbol differs from allegory in being actual not invented, the outward manifestation which partakes of the reality it symbolises.

In this sense S. John's Gospel is full of symbol. The story in its whole development is a symbol. For it is a drama manifesting purpose. It displays the reason, the "word," which informs the movement. It shews a "way" running through the sequence of events, and this way more and more appears as bound up with the will affection faith of the persons concerned: it becomes at last identical with the spirit which dominates them. When we talk thus we soon become confused, because we are obsessed with the problem of personality. That was not the problem of the first or second centuries

A.D. Moreover the poetic tinge in the evangelist's mind freed him from such difficulties. He talks not of personality, he talks of life; and throughout his Gospel it is life abundant and profound that absorbs all secondary modes of expression.

If we turn to Westcott and Hort's Greek Testament, we find the Gospel distributed into sections, each marked by initial capitals. Hence we get a scheme:

I. Prologue and opening of the story in Galilee: i—ii, 11.

II. Success; "He must increase, but I must decrease"; Galilee, and first passover in Jerusalem: ii, 12—iv.

III. Feeding of the five thousand; turning point in success; Galilee, and second passover in Jerusalem: v—vi.

IV. Jerusalem and opposition: third passover night: vii—xii.

V. Third passover, victory through death: xiii—xx.

VI. Epilogue in Galilee: xxi.

A quiet dawn: a bright morning: at noon clouds gather: and the night descends in gloom. Then a new dawn brings the new day to the wide world.

The epilogue is a beautiful completion, whether or no it be an addition to the original work. Dr. A. W. Robinson used to cite a parallel from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. There too a prologue introduces the theme. The

theme is then developed, as anticipated in the prologue, by a narrative which is punctuated by three Christmas days, as the Gospel is by three passovers. And finally Tennyson added an epilogue in which, as in the Gospel, return is made to the simple and personal intimacies which have arisen from the events recorded.

There are other resemblances in the poem which might help us to a right judgement in that difficult problem of the historical conscience of the evangelist. A story runs through the poem, but it is told slightly, with emphasis on facts only here and there, and always for the sake of the thoughts they give rise to. There is frequent reference to the contemporary opposition of science and faith, as in the Gospel the opposition of the Jews is coloured by the theological controversies of the end of the first century. Yet in both this chiefly serves to bring out the author's positive faith. In both the events are remembered from a somewhat distant past, and the impression reproduced no longer corresponds exactly with the matter of fact. You will remember the stanza of *In Memoriam* (xcv) in which Tennyson tells how one night he sat till sunrise on the lawn, and how at last the living soul of his friend was flashed on his, and a miracle of communion in the indissoluble life was wrought. Would others have so described what happened? Would Tennyson

himself have described it just so the next day? He confesses that the exaltation faded at the time into doubt. And when years afterwards he writes he has to say:

Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame  
In matter-moulded forms of speech,  
Or even for intellect to reach  
Thro' memory that which I became.

Does not this suggest a way of reading the raising of Lazarus? To consider this an invention of allegory is to isolate the chapter from the rest of the narrative, for even if there be touches of allegory elsewhere they are not elaborate and sustained as this is. But it is no less difficult to accept the miracle as plain history. Such a stupendous act at such a crisis in our Lord's career: yet unknown to the other evangelists, or if known, deliberately ignored: how can that be explained? Was the evidence considered ambiguous; that Lazarus was certainly raised, yet not perhaps from death but from a trance? The difference might seem a little matter to S. John, bathed as he was in the consciousness of that life eternal, which is here and now in Christ. The sleeper rose at the call of the Lord; why linger on the manner of the calling? Not the swathed corpse, so awfully emerging from the sepulchre, but the Lord's "I am the resurrection and the life," is the truth that admits no ambiguity.

But this is mere conjecture ; a refuge for superficial familiarity with the science of our passing day. In a few years the difficulties we chiefly feel will change their hue. Then new difficulties will take their place. And S. John's narrative will remain, still meaning something beyond our explanations. He meant something that was beyond the doubts and explanations of his own day : " How hard for intellect to reach thro' memory that which I became." In all the signs which he records the eternal breaks in : and when that happens perception varies according to the capacity of the percipients : the world of appearance quivers under the shock. The rabbis said that at Sinai each Israelite heard the LORD speaking just what each could receive. S. John writes that when a voice spoke certain words from heaven some said it thundered. S. Peter entered the tomb in the garden and saw the grave clothes remarkably arranged. The beloved disciple (who had already seen that) entered, and then " he saw and believed." Saw what ? The same as S. Peter ? Perhaps not. And so with Lazarus. He saw, and he saw a revelation : he remembered, and the revelation deepened. And still it means " I am the resurrection and the life." " I am," not, " There shall be."

This is history : but history which has passed through a most uncommon mind. Perhaps no history with real truth in it ever



passes through a historian's mind without some transformation of its matter of fact. But if we are to receive all that S. John would give us of his deepest truth we must allow that his transformations are perhaps uncommonly radical. I say "allow" and "perhaps," for we are too ignorant of these far-off ages and the literary axioms which prevailed in them to be dogmatic. But until we allow some latitude about the critical difficulties they worry and hamper us: and we would be free to put questions to our evangelist of more abiding interest?

What does he mean by "the Word"? To trace the antecedents of his language there is no need to go beyond Judaism. Every phrase in the prologue is derived from the Hebrew or Hellenistic Wisdom books. Yet there is a breadth and depth here that none of those books reach. The mystery of God whom "no man hath seen" is felt as fully as by Plato or the modern absolute idealist. And the Word solves the problem. To S. John, as to a Greek, Word means broadly Reason. His philosophy is, like all effectual philosophies, a faith. In life as experienced he recognises an underlying and pervading reason. If there, then in God the source reason must also be. But reason is necessarily a proceeding, manifesting power. Hence the Word that was ever with God and was God, comes forth from God, expresses God in

creation life illumination. So the argument doubles back upon itself, and the dim uncertain reason to which common experience witnesses, being drawn from such a source, is invested with the glory of its source: experience is transformed by faith; life as known becomes a manifestation of eternal truth light goodness; the outward with all its limitations is accepted as the effective instrument, the sacrament of the inward. As the Word "was" with God from the beginning, so the true light which lighteth every man "was" always "coming into the world."

The idea is throughout of movement; and that is to be noticed, for at first sight the theology of John might seem to be stationary as contrasted with the "energy" of Paul. Energy, working, are the characteristic words in S. Paul: Being, abiding in S. John. That the Christ saves, redeems, works divinely, is in the main, S. Paul's explanation of the person of Christ. Jesus Christ is God, is S. John's. But that only means that new questions have come forward when S. John writes. The activity, the movement fills his view quite as much as it did S. Paul's, and the difficulty of the movement, the opposition, the issue even trembling in the balance during the process of strife, is accentuated by S. John.

In the prologue this is sketched with no clear drawn limits of time. All through

history the light has been pouring into the darkness, the life contending with death. The Word has been coming to every man, but has been rejected by some, by most. Then he comes to those who believe, and of those again only some are carried inward to knowledge and so to the new spiritual birth. And at each stage an enlarged environment of darkness and opposition supervenes. Yet the darkness has never overwhelmed the light. The inner movement still remains the purpose reason Word, of the whole.

Hence we gain a sacramental perception of all that goes on. Common life with all its realism, its limitation, its admixed evil, is the means through which we reach the eternal reason and may join in the eternal progress to the goal of God. But it had become increasingly difficult to do so. The glimmering light needed to be reinforced: the sacrament so sadly disguised needed the manifestation of some vigorous sign; the little company of the new born needed a leader.

This need might well have pressed more and more on the heart of S. John in the long years he spent in the populous heathen city of Asia Minor. A need does not prove that there is a divine satisfaction for it, but it impels men to search if haply there may be one. And so S. John, remembering the days of his Lord's flesh, knowing all that S. Paul and the writer to the Hebrews had.

taught, familiar with Jewish messianic beliefs and with the Christian church's transformation of these beliefs, and himself convinced of his own uninterrupted communion with Christ present though no longer seen, declared that the need had been satisfied when "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten Son receiving from a Father, full of grace and truth."

To many, if not in some degree to all men, the perfect expression of a thought is guarantee of its truth. That faculty for persuasion is peculiarly S. John's; the very ring of the sentence persuades us to accept its truth. But the persuasion is carried further in the narrative which follows. There we see the disciples gradually recognising a character never falling from its ideal height, a strength and a serenity of faith and love, which impels them to acknowledge this their Master as one sent by the Father, as in perfect union with the Father. More than that, they find that he imparts his own character strength faith love to them, so that if he is in the Father they are in him and with him in the Father too. This comes about gradually as in the first three Gospels and is completed (as in the first three Gospels) by the "sign" of the resurrection. Only in this Gospel there are a good many points at which the process goes forward by a leap, signs in which the glory is

wonderfully manifested, and these begin at once. And the wonder of the manifestations is chiefly to be seen in this characteristic: they are nearly all connected with the limitations of manhood, the difficulties disappointments necessities humiliations of the Lord. And it is quite in keeping with the whole course of the revelation that the triumphant, "Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in him," should be uttered when Judas had gone forth to the betrayal and the last retreat from shameful death was cut off. "And it was night," says the evangelist, and "Therefore when he was gone out, Jesus said . . . ." The realism of the tragedy is not less felt in this Gospel than in the earlier Gospels; it is emphasised. And it is not simply the scandal of the cross, as S. Paul had expressed it. It is also the tragedy of the incarnation: the Word incarnate "came unto his own and his own received him not." Those disputes with the Jews are misconceived when any bitterness is introduced into the Lord's pleadings. He pleads and scolds not. This opposition is part of the thwarting which arises from his real limitations as a man, a Jew, a Galilean, one "in advance of his time;" and in these limitations the evangelist perceives a sign manifesting glory, and would make us, reading with sympathetic awe, perceive it too.

He means us to read with awe. In these

disputes the Saviour makes those tremendous claims which have offended so many historical imaginations, as out of keeping with the synoptic character of Christ. Let us acknowledge that the speeches both of our Lord and of the Jews have been quite freely composed by the evangelist; that he is concerned to shew us the mind of Christ, not always to repeat his very words. Not always: yet I fancy he often does give the very words. Matthew Arnold's test, Jesus over the heads of his reporters, is not lightly to be set aside. The beloved disciple did treasure up the paradoxical utterances to which the other disciples, not understanding, paid little attention. That was how he came to make a fourth Gospel. These utterances were paradoxical. They arose from the consciousness of the human Master that he was the Word of God, and S. John never ceased to meditate on that perplexing truth. At last, after long years of service to his Lord no longer visible and no longer thwarted by the earlier limitations, he gave his solution of the paradox in this "perfection of ultimate utterance," the narrative of the fourth Gospel. He shews the concentric circles narrowing inwards: every man, those who believe, those who know. Then those who know are brought into Jesus Christ; and made one with him; and are sent in turn as he was sent to gather in the rest: concentric circles still but widening

now, as the one Master Jesus expands in the disciples' recognition into the eternal Word. Hence the very difficult antitheses with which this Gospel teems. On the one hand we see, evidently, the Master in the midst of his disciples : on the other hand moves the Word with all the ages depending on him. On the one hand we follow the story and hear the Master's promises, and all this in familiar language ; we recognise a process in time. On the other hand, the Master speaks of judgement now, of passing now from death to life, of never dying, of all being united in one as he is with the Father ; and we know that this means eternal life in a sense that may be experienced but not defined. And as if to flout that incapacity of logic, yet another antithesis is forced upon us. On the one hand there is Jesus a man among men, vivid, concrete, linked to his servants by all the bonds of human affection. On the other hand he describes himself in vast abstract terms, which scarce fit a person, the way, the truth, the life, the resurrection, the light. And if these be merely metaphors the immense promise which they do convey, however obscurely, fades again.

But S. John will have nothing of on the one hand, on the other hand ; all is one, deep within deep. "Have I been so long time with you and thou hast not known

me Philip?" All these outwards are the means of that knowledge which carries us into the inward. All life is sacramental, but all sacraments are gathered up and made intelligible in the sacrament of the incarnation of the Word. This principle, sketched in the prologue, is elaborated, not indeed by logic but by intensity of affection, in the last discourses, xiii-xvii. The Lord bids farewell to his disciples. He tells them that he goes to the Father, but the going is to be a richer coming; and the coming is immediate in the speedy sending of the Spirit, the Comforter. In the universal house of the Father, are many mansions, or spheres of intercourse. Hitherto he has been with his disciples in the elementary sphere of sight and touch and authority, the personal sphere as we count personality. Henceforth he will be with them in the sphere of the Spirit: they knowing their mission as apostles, he recognised by them as the eternal way, truth, life, Word. And so through him, all that are his shall come to the Father; till all be one as Son and Father, Word and God, are one; "I in them and thou in me, all perfected into one, that the world may know that thou didst send me, and didst love them even as thou lovedst me." Thus the reconciliation of the antithesis is effected by the sacramental principle. Each taken by itself and put over against the other leaves an apparently insuper-



able contradiction. But when we start from the visible, temporal experience, using it trustfully, that experience deepens into a richer experience of the invisible, eternal: the second is manifested and reached through the first. Thus the godhead of Christ is reached through his manhood; the divine way through the maze of history; the truth through its admixture with human error, through painful controversy and the docility of goodwill. And this last element shews why our Lord connected his new "mansion" with the sending of the Spirit: It is the Holy Spirit who transmutes the actual evil which as yet does always mar immediate experience. Then too we see why progress must still be by the concentric circles. The evil is time after time transmuted by the readiness of the "inspired" minority to sacrifice personal ambition for the sake of eternal truth beauty goodness. Through the "elect" whom the spirit sanctifies Christ wins the "all mankind" whom he has redeemed: so at last God shall be all in all.

This sacramental principle became the rule for the church's theology and conduct. It has not superseded apocalyptic hope or severer philosophy or mystical intuition. But it is the common form into which all these may be gathered for the Christian *plebs*. The apocalyptic hope flames up in periods of trial and can hardly come to its own in quiet

times. Moreover it is difficult to express except by bold pictorial imagery, and neither the revival of outworn imagery nor the deliberate invention of new imagery befits maturing faith. Strict philosophy appeals little to the multitude, but the sacramental principle itself is nearly philosophic. It is akin to the principle of the idealists that though appearance is not reality, it partakes of reality and through appearance reality is manifested. The idealist philosophy is severely criticised, and so improved, to-day. But our conception of the sacramental principle admits a like criticism and improvement. It is receiving it in the tribulation of these years. We are forced to be realists and to face the shocking aspect of things. Courage and candour alone attain to the eternal. We are forced also to consider more conscientiously the problem of evil in the world; how far it hinders the working of the principle; how far acquiescence in the will of God must be crossed by resistance to evil; whether God takes a side; whether war is judgement or the outpouring of the Spirit. And the peace of the mystic is obviously shared by the plain man who is a sacramentalist. To him too all is in One, and in the midst of tumult peace reigns in the ground of the heart. Only, the fellowship of disciples means more to him than the mystic can generally explain. For a mystic is "one who knows a thing he cannot tell," and the

sacramental principle can be taught; it is the churchman's temper; our Prayer Book illustrates it on every page.

And that brings us to the third strain of the Johannine harmony. History, theology and naiveté, we said, were interwoven. That may have seemed a cross division. I hope what has been said about the sacramental principle may explain it. For the naiveté is S. John's recommendation of the principle. Thus he brings the eternal home to us, and makes our homeliness eternal. The naiveté appears in his very simple language. But it is more than that. Such names as Father and Paraclete belong to the intimate particular affection which unites all the persons in the Saviour's circle and vivifies abstractions. Our translation of Paraclete by Comforter is not philologically exact. An exact equivalent is hard to find. Say Advocate, and an explanatory note is still required. But Comforter conveys the emotion of the name. In this loving Galilean family which extends its ties through the stress of Judean trial, and so finds more and more an eternal quality in its affections, the mystery of the Saviour's person is not so much discovered as entered into. "My Lord and my God": how much that means from Thomas, how little without the intimate antecedents and the setting of simplicity and awe. Tolstoy somewhere

writes to this effect, that the life of Jesus is the metaphysics of Christ.

Life means relationship. The life of Jesus in this Gospel flows and overflows to all mankind from his closer relationships. There is a morning freshness in the earlier Gospels which could not be repeated. Consider their feeling for nature. Compare the parable of the sower with the parable of the good shepherd, or the miracle of the stilling of the storm with the sign of the water and the wine at Cana. And there is an unstudied grace in the intercourse of the Lord with his disciples in those Gospels which we miss in S. John. But there is compensation. The ever deepening union, the restrained yet passionate love by which the Lord draws his own into himself and which culminates in the last discourses, is not less natural for being more divine. It is more divine. We can perceive how this inexhaustible intimacy may be the same in kind as the union of the Son with the Father; and how absolute is the meaning of the promise, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

That is one of the "claims" which have daunted those who turned from the synoptists to S. John. Here, it seems, is the Son of God and not the Son of man. But our Lord calls himself Son of man in this Gospel too. And a careful examination of the promises together with the claims will shew that the

claims are not so much for the uniqueness of the Christ as for his mission to bring others with himself into God. The divinity is inclusive not exclusive. "He that believeth in me the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father" (xiv, 12). Here, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, is the Christ who is all in all being fulfilled, who is not Christ by himself but together with those whom he draws to the Father.

This idea, till lately strange to us, had always belonged to Jewish messianic doctrine. Of late our Jewish brethren have been vindicating the historical value of S. John's Gospel. They say it shews so close an acquaintance with Jewish life before the fall of Jerusalem that it must preserve a genuine tradition. One Jewish scholar, Dr. Abelson, in his book, *The immanence of God in the Rabbinical literature*, comes to this Gospel from the philosophic side. And he finds its doctrine of Christ not difficult to approach sympathetically. He recognises this inclusiveness in the claims, and says they are more reasonable to Jewish ears than Philo's doctrine of the Word. Of course there is a claim in this Gospel, as throughout the New Testament, which goes beyond Judaic faith; but this twofold witness from Judaism is worth reflecting upon.

And if such broader reading of the divine claim of Christ in S. John be allowed, it falls in with the growing tendency to return to the high traditional estimate of its theology. For criticism is never purely literary. Not intellect alone, but the whole man presses to an already anticipated goal; nor one man ever by himself, but as he enters, even in resisting, the general movement of his age.

Three stages may be distinguished in the criticism of S. John. First, the passages in which our Lord seemed to claim absolute divinity were recognised as characteristic of this Gospel and it was for their sake exalted above the others: for history as for dogma it was the norm. Secondly, these exclusive claims were suspected as incompatible with apostolic simplicity of faith. Hence testimony to authorship and date was tested. It proved obscure, and the historical authority of the fourth Gospel was set aside. Now, thirdly, the whole Gospel has been read again more carefully. The religious instinct of a new age is found to be enlightened by it. The hard sayings are examined afresh in an extended context. A broader interpretation proves no reducing of the Christian faith, but the recovery of that half-forgotten truth, which is grandly formulated in the *Quicumque vult*: "One Christ, not by conversion of the godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God." And together with this

development of interpretation, the critical evidence is being tested anew. The early date, perhaps the connexion with S. John, seem once more probable. We shall never read this Gospel as we did before critical difficulties were faced. It will henceforth stand as a communication of the mind of Christ exalted and still speaking through the Spirit, rather than as a precise record of the words of the Lord Jesus. But the continuity will be trusted; the mind revealed in all the Gospels will be recognised as one mind.

## LECTURE II.

### THE EPISTLES.

The second and third Epistles which now bear the name of John were not always received as the apostle's writings. Their actual signature is the Presbyter, and they are pastorals, the first addressed to a church, the second to one Gaius who held a prominent position in that church. The first Epistle has no signature but is clearly connected by its opening verses with the Gospel which now bears the name of John, and the connexion becomes plainer still as we read on. This Epistle applies the Gospel's doctrine of incarnation and sacrifice to the practical life of the brotherhood. Short as the second and third Epistles are, enough resemblance in thought may be observed with that of the first Epistle and the Gospel to allow us to suppose that all come from one circle, and the early allusions to this strain of theology shew that Ephesus and Asia Minor was the home of it. The style of all four treatises is so nearly the same that we may suppose all to be written by the same person. But the Gospel evidently goes back to an authority who was a disciple of the Lord himself and



who is called therein "The disciple whom Jesus loved." The first Epistle will be derived from this disciple also. But the actual writing of each, and, to a degree we need not define, the composition may be due to some pupil of this disciple: compare 1 Peter which is written by Silvanus, and the Gospel according to S. Mark which is the pupil's record of S. Peter's teaching.

If we also hold that the beloved disciple is John the apostle, this will accord with one form of the ecclesiastical tradition which makes S. John author rather than writer of the books. But is the beloved disciple S. John? It is startling to find how little evidence there is for this before the last quarter of the second century. There are allusions to the Ephesian theology, perhaps to the books themselves, but no mention of S. John in this connexion, no indisputable evidence of his life at Ephesus: indeed there is a rather dim tradition of his martyrdom in Palestine. Nevertheless further reflexion may incline us to return to the long accepted view. When we do first hear of his sojourn at Ephesus and of his authorship, both are taken for granted as though for a long while there had been no doubt about it. And there is one exception to the earlier silence. Justin Martyr, half way through the century, alludes to the Apocalypse as the apostle's; and the casual allusion indicates an accepted not a

novel belief. And whether the belief were right or wrong it connects the apostle with this Ephesian theology. The vague, sparse and anonymous allusions to the Gospel in early years are not unnatural since this Gospel is so different from the other three, and (I think) so far in advance of the age in its whole presentation of the faith.

And the silence about the apostle's episcopal sojourn in Ephesus would not be surprising if we did not import certain preconceptions about the apostolic office. Nothing could be greater than the spiritual authority of the apostolate, but its outward eminence was for that very reason indifferent. To the rulers in Jerusalem the Galilean apostles were ignorant men, and I daresay many of us feel, as the standing critical difficulty, an unlikelihood in S. Peter or S. John having written and composed so well. We see from Acts and from S. Paul's epistles too that the title, apostle, was allowed to others besides the twelve. And when we are pressed with the objection that Paul not John is the apostle whom the earliest writers connect with Ephesus, we are tempted to rejoin that the modern idea of an apostle's notoriety may have arisen from S. Paul's vigorous assertion (made necessary by opposition) of his own apostolic authority. From the glimpse of church life and discipline given by 1 and 2 John; from the peculiar character of the

theology in 1 John and the Gospel, we may infer that the Ephesian theology developed in a somewhat isolated circle. The background is not the general background of the west which is pictured for us in the Acts and by S. Paul, who was at Ephesus as the traveller not as the bishop. Fancy has some right to imagine S. John exercising a quiet apostolate at Ephesus, profoundly influencing a group of disciples, but not making any stir in the world. If such a fancy is countered by citing the thunderous temper of the sons of Zebedee, it is fair to answer that two or three episodes do not prove a whole character, that after Pentecost other characters were changed from their Galilean beginnings, and that the later tradition itself indicates the combination of serene self-effacement with passionate defence of truth in the aged S. John.

The outcome of this brief excursion into criticism is that we shall make bold to refer Gospel and first Epistle to S. John as their source or author. We shall have little to do in our lecture with the second and third Epistles, so we will not linger over the early objections to their genuineness. And the attractive problem about "John the presbyter" may be left to our final retrospect. In that retrospect additional reasons will appear for postulating a pupil or secretary between the teaching apostle and the readers.

I feel, though many do not, that the terms in which the beloved disciple is described in the Gospel, demand this. Who the pupil was matters little. We know that he was a deep and beautiful spirit.

We imagine then S. John as having long held the position of apostolic bishop in Ephesus. He has for long meddled little with the church in other parts, and has become a venerable memory rather than an impressive force outside his own flock. At Ephesus he has long taught the goodness of his Lord so simply but so profoundly that his doctrine has penetrated the hearts of his own friends but has appeared, so far as it has been heard of, a novelty to others. Of late a disciple, filled with the Spirit, has been setting out his master's teaching in a life of Christ, a Gospel which is like yet unlike the Gospels already current. The same disciple now, at his master's direction, writes a pastoral letter to all who have read the Gospel. In the pastoral he applies the principles of the Gospel to the practical needs of the church—to the brothers, as they affectionately style themselves.

There is good reason for doing this. Many years have passed since the faith of Jesus Christ was first carried abroad. A century has passed since Christ was born at Bethlehem. Few or none are left who knew him in the flesh. The first generation of converts has

almost disappeared. What S. Paul laid down for the direction of the nascent congregations no longer suffices. Much that was of burning importance then, the dispute of Jew and Gentile in the church for instance, is forgotten now. But new questions, new difficulties in practice have arisen. The church is settling down for steady growth in the midst of a world the sin of which she is commissioned to take away. The doubts and duties of a settled community need regulation, illumination.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”—“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Here are two aspects of salvation; the immediate deliverance of the elect from the evil that encompasses them, and the gradual removal of the evil from the whole world. The one is an assurance which is enjoyed by those who inaugurate a new victory of faith, who gather themselves into a little band of witnesses for God against an indifferent or persecuting world; Maccabees, Covenanters, the “Saints” of the Psalter, each nonconforming sect as it arises to assert the thoroughness of Gospel life in the face of the sleeping church. And it is natural that this aspect should be marked in the three Galilean Gospels which preserve the contemporary impression of such a revival when all things

were being made new. Only we must observe that the other aspect is not excluded from these Gospels. That is a characteristic of New Testament faith throughout. It is always so complete. When we arrange it into theological or literary schemes we are apt to separate the elements we distinguish for the sake of an easily comprehended theory.

So too in S. John we shall be always aware of the complementary aspect. Yet it is natural that the emphasis should in him be shifted. For teaching, as he does, when the first outburst of the new life is past, he has to exercise a pastoral direction of a settled community in which "conversion" is no longer the norm, but, as with us to-day, children are being brought up by Christian parents in the "state of salvation" to which God has called them. And moreover this settled community is part of a church, recognised as one throughout the world, and no longer true to the divine Spirit that inspires it if it acquiesces in the sin of the outer world. So soon as the idea of the church dominates, the peace of the little flock yields to the conviction that the sin of the whole world must be taken away.

Of that, more presently. Meanwhile let us remember that such a recognition of fellowship and privilege—the state of salvation, and of duty towards the people and the institutions

of the perishing world, bring with them dangers relapses infections. \* The conscience of the little flock is what conscience ought to be, innocent communion with God. The conscience of the catholic church is seldom untroubled. Her continuous life becomes commonplace and is often stained.

Hence in this Epistle we have a new form of teaching about sin and forgiveness. In brief it is this: S. John deals with the everyday sins of good people, and with the "sin," the general sinfulness which, now that the consuming fire of primitive conversion burns fainter, continually produces "sins" that are inconsistent with the life of the newborn.

Our Lord in the days of his flesh called men to repent. He condemned "with anger" the cruelty of complacent pride. But he dealt with sin in general very simply, dwelling more on the Father's forgiving love than on the bitterness of the children's sins. S. Paul interpreted the cross as a remedy for sin, insisted on men's sinfulness, shewed that the start of the new life was a "justification," a free pardon, having accepted which the faithful were henceforth debtors; there was to be no more sin within the church. Sin did break out, and with each outbreak he took practical measures. But his ideal was life with Christ in heaven even while here on earth, and readiness to meet the Lord at his coming, unstained.

S. John keeps the ideal as high. "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God (i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ) keepeth him; and the evil one toucheth him not" (v, 18). When one of the brethren sins he falls out of the new life into which he has been begotten, but there may be and ought to be immediate return: "If we confess our sins God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (i, 9). And this allowing of repeated recovery is no resignation to the weakness of mortal nature. The oscillation shall not go on till the end: the state of salvation is a state of improvement: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (i, 7). The tense in the Greek signifies gradual cleansing: by degrees the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses the sinful impulse quite away.

The successive counsels and discipline of S. Paul have here become a rule of life, a generalised principle for sincerity and encouragement. Sincerity is of course indispensable. There is no indulgence in evil. Indeed S. John contemplates the possibility of such obstinate sin as S. Paul once had to deal with at Corinth. And of that he says: "There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I



say that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin; and there is a sin not unto death" (v, 16f). He had just laid down the rule that "if any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death." The principle seems to be that intercession which is plainly hopeless would be insincere, and the apostle will not advise it. The exception would be very terrible if we did not also notice that he is guiding others, not binding himself. Perhaps no case was certainly hopeless to S. John. "There is a sin not unto death:" had he ever actually met with a sin of which he was sure it was unto death? For notice also the power he recognises in the fellowship, the influence of brotherhood. What might be hopeless in a man left to himself is different when he is loved by his family. So T. H. Green used to teach that freewill resides in the whole community, not in the neglected individual whom the community has to save. And so S. John lays stress on what the New Testament always asserts, that the Spirit is given to the whole body of the faithful not to the individual; notice the emphatic "all" in I John ii, 20 (RV*mar.*), cf. John i, 16. So especially in that most tender passage, I John iii, 19 f: "Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him, whereinsoever our heart con-

demn us ; because God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." The "hereby" refers to what has gone before, that precept of practical love for the brethren which ends : "My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue ; but in deed and truth." The doctrine of forgiveness is assured to scrupulous consciences by the practice of charity.

The rule of charity is another need of developed church life. The principle had been laid down by S. Paul, and he had taken pains to apply it to a particular instance, the poverty of the Judean church for which he called upon other churches to make contributions and to do this with systematic foresight. But S. John's Epistle shews a latter stage in charitable organisation. Poverty within the brotherhood has become an everyday problem. The church is obliged to face it thoughtfully, as every branch and every sect is obliged when it settles down to continuous corporate life. No test of the initial zeal is more searching. If the rich will really and truly share their wealth with the destitute whom they invite to kneel with them at Christ's board, it matters little though the primitive accent of piety lose its warmth. If not, no passion and no orthodoxy will do instead. There is a worldly callousness that ruins a maturing church. There is also a kindly honesty in some men of the world

which so raises the sincerity of common life that more is gained than lost: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," said the Johannine Christ, "if ye have love one to another."

S. John's Epistle is largely occupied with this problem. It is the earliest treatise on Christian economics. If we give the phrase the meaning which its inventors—F. D. Maurice and his friends—meant it to have, we might call it the earliest manual of Christian socialism. For Maurice dissuaded the doctrinaires from defining a particular system beforehand which might be thwarted by varying circumstances, confuse rights and duties, and leave no room for fresh impulses of generosity. Such a scheme appears in one place in the New Testament. The little Jewish Christian community at Jerusalem is described in the early chapters of the Acts as organising its resources for the benefit of those in need. Their scheme was no doubt partly recommended to them by their expectation of the speedy coming of the Day of the Lord, and it was voluntary and spontaneous. Yet it was a system; and still as we read of it, we feel the charm which simple socialistic systems always have. But the subsequent poverty of the whole Judean church, to which S. Paul's epistles witness, may have been due to this in part. And besides that, it was too private and self-

contained to be a model for the great missionary church that was destined for the future. Dr. Scott Holland used to trace what he called "the tragedy of the Acts" to the blindness of the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem towards the missionary enthusiasm by which S. Paul was presently to shock them. S. John makes no such mistake. He is not vague, but he has no confined scheme of administration. When we compare Plato in the *Laws* or S. Paul, if the author be S. Paul and S. Paul alone, in the Pastoral Epistles, we cannot but specially admire the aged S. John who at the end of his long life still avoids preceptual detail, yet shapes broad principles so practically. He is not vague, and he spurns compromise. "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" (iii, 16 f). The novelty of this springs from the intensity. There is something like the argumentative appeal in S. James. Both apostles inherited the spirit of generous benevolence from the Jewish Law. In Judaism too the settled Church had at once recognised the practical duty of care for the poor (cf. Gal. ii, 10). The soaring idealism of the pre-exilic prophets was curbed to a sober pace when the

post-exilic church made the Law its chart of life, and some still think those post-exilic centuries formal and hard. Yet it is their theology that anticipates S. John's. The tragic sacrificial doctrine of the Law and the pastoral care of the Law for every several soul foreshadow S. John's doctrine of the cleansing Blood and S. John's rule of charity.

In each case there is connexion between the theology and the generous rule. Love of the brethren in S. John is the necessary outcome of the incarnation of the Word. The sincere practice of the love, as actual needs call it forth, is all of a piece with his insistence on the reality of the flesh of Christ. It is rather surprising to us that S. John lays so much stress on that side of the incarnation. The noted difference between the Christ, so divine, in his Gospel, and the Christ, so naively human, in the synoptists, make us expect it to be the other way. But what he reiterates is that "every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God" (iv, 2). We may explain that he has the Docetic heretics in view, and so he may. But his opposition to them is fortified by his own positive realisation of the importance of the truth they neglected. And here is one of the points which proved how important it was. The church, said S. Paul, is the body of Christ. "As he is," says S. John,

“even so are we in this world” (iv, 17). Both go back to the mind of Christ, who said that those who shewed compassion to the least of his brethren did it unto him (Matt. xxv, 40). But S. John had to superintend the prosaic details of provision for the sick and poor. He also had to encourage some of the brethren to “lay down their life” for the needs of others. If we look at what is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews about mutual aid in seasons of persecution we shall be more ready to understand that encouragement literally, and persecution has its sordid details as well as its heroic glamour. In a profound reverence for the “flesh” of the incarnate Lord he found the steady love which transforms prosaic or sordid details, and supplies the deficiencies in physical courage. Of course he did not stop at this. That was never his way of dealing with anything. He overcame the average man’s difficulties by absorbing them in the flood of a very far from average theology. Thus he declares in his introductory paragraph—the “prologue” to the Epistle—that he means to advance the practical “fellowship” of his flock by writing to them. But he sets about this purpose by a brief rehearsal, simple but how magnificent, of the tremendous mystery of the incarnation, and this he does “that ye also may have fellowship with us.” Then at once he adds, “Yea, and our fellowship is with the Father,

and with his Son Jesus Christ." And then he adds, almost quoting what Jesus Christ had said in his Gospel, "And these things we write, that our joy may be fulfilled," What strange attractive interplay of the simple and profound. What almost unconscious assimilation of the principle of the incarnation in common life. What quiet determination to make fellowship a real thing because it is so deeply rooted in divine mysteries.

In like temper he quietly says (iii, 14), "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." Here is the whole doctrine of the Johannine Gospel about eternal life as present now, as something which does not depend on time at all. And here is the Gospel idea of "knowledge" as the means of reaching into this timeless felicity, where all is unity in love and doubt has no entrance. And if any read the Gospel and wonder whether such experience can be, or at least can be communicated, here is the plain man's answer. It is just the normal condition of the churchman, the Christian socialist. And it can be his normal condition because Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

No one can read Epistle or Gospel without staying again and again to ponder over this recurring thought of life eternal to be lived here and now, this time and change-subduing life which is one and the same thing as knowing

the Father through the Son whom he has sent. The very essence of that sacramental view, which is S. John's "light," is in this. If only we can make this thought our master thought, the fear of death is taken away, and the force of temptation to sin ought to be broken. Questions about the survival of personality lose their point. The communion of saints becomes the most certain truth. S. Paul had given a like assurance, in Romans viii, 38 f: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." There will always be some hearts to whom St. Paul's hopeful passionate rhetoric brings more satisfaction than S. John's brooding thought. But there will also be minds in every generation to whom S. John will seem to have put the comfortable truth on a still surer basis. And I fancy there are many such minds in this generation.

For one thing S. Paul is not timeless. On the whole he looks forward. The present communion of saints is not the form in which he envisages immortality so constantly as is the resurrection. This is in part because he belongs to that earlier day when the church was still expecting Christ to come in a little while with his saints from heaven to meet



his saints on earth. And "then . . . shall we ever be with the Lord." Even during his life-time the delay of that advent was felt. We hear a difference, a progress in S. Paul's own language as we pass from Thessalonians to Corinthians and then to Ephesians. Still *Maran Atha*, "Lord, come," is the motto of the whole of S. Paul. When S. John taught at Ephesus the delay had been longer. Moreover Jerusalem had fallen, and there are many signs in the New Testament that this fearful yet fruitful visitation was received by the church as in some sense a coming of the Lord. Hence we are not surprised to find that S. John presents the Christian hope of the advent in a novel form, less as a hope than as an experience, less as an outward than as an inward operation.

He sometimes mingles the old phraseology with his new thought. In the Gospel (v, 25), introducing the Saviour's utterance with the "Verily, verily," which so often indicates the evangelist's free phrasing of some unusual oracle, he continues: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself: and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." That is the Johannine interpretation, and, according to the view we are taking

in these lectures, the most truly inspired interpretation of the whole mind of Christ. Then follows the plea to those whom it startles: "Marvel not at this." Then the same truth, expressed in the old familiar terms, is appended as not contradictory but elementary, and needing such further thinking out: "For the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgement."

One reason for claiming that this new does not contradict that old would be this: S. John by no means asserts that the great advent has as yet been consummated. For him as for S. Paul and for all the early believers "the advent" is the Christian "hope." Dr. Brooke thinks he returned in his Epistle to the expectation of a speedy fulfilment of the hope. I do not feel so sure of that. "Little children, it is the last hour" (ii, 18) seems to me more like what Dr. Hort says S. Peter meant (1 Pet. i, 5) when he spoke of "salvation ready to be revealed in a season of extremity." At any rate "hour" is a term capable of indefinite extension. However that may be the hope is evident in iii, 1-3: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God . . .

Beloved now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him: for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself even as he is pure." This is distinct, but notice how all the traditional imagery which St. Paul uses frankly in Thessalonians and still keeps in his more philosophic passage, 1 Cor. xv, is laid aside by S. John. Here there is no trumpet, no meeting in the air. And the key-word itself is changed. S. John no longer speaks of the Advent, the Coming. He speaks of the Lord being manifested. To S. Paul as to his Jewish ancestors the imaginative picture sufficed of the Lord coming as from a distant place. S. John thinks of him as always and everywhere present, but as yet his presence is not known by all—he comes to his own and they receive him not; and by none is it fully realised for none are yet "like him." But he shall be known, and the children shall be like him. He shall be manifested. We shall see him. Yet even that term "see" is deepened to more than physical sight: we shall see him "as he is."

Again there will be some to whom S. Paul's frank imagery appeals more powerfully. And of these some will feel that it is not necessary to read S. John as I have been reading him, and that such reading is a

diminishing of the substance of the faith. Let such consider whether what they call substance may not be to more curious minds materialism, and whether they ought not to allow those others in their complex thought though they need not modify their own simpler apprehension. Some again will hold to the imagery as being the best, because it is the bold poetic manner of conveying truth that must always be imperfectly expressed. With these it is impossible to disagree altogether. The same loss of the magic charm of art is felt in the Old Testament when we turn from the early prophets to the later school, or in Greek literature when we turn from Aeschylus to Euripides. But let these also consider whether we are not compelled to face this loss and gain as generation succeeds generation in all ages, and whether the restrained thoughtfulness of S. John is not what an increasing multitude are needing in our generation. S. John who was perhaps suspected in his own day of a kind of modernism, provides the model for that more introspective faith which is so honestly desired by many to-day.

He is restrained and he is thoughtful. But he also has a passion and an imagination to restrain. His ideal of sinlessness, of heroic love, of final perfection, is at least as grand as anything elsewhere in the New Testament. He restrains the vision that the senses present to him because he knows that Christian

maturity must deepen sincerity and strain towards exactness in confession of truth. His powerfulness in genuine imagination appears in his carrying back of all precepts to divine principles, and in the immense range that he foresees for the principles. Think of "God is love," and then of the development, "We love because he first loved us" (iv, 19); and then measure the imaginative intellect of the apostle by setting against that the commonplace which later editors substituted, "We love him, because he first loved us." And what genuinely imaginative devotion is required to comprehend the two-fold immensity of the incarnation as against the superficial "idols" of the heresies which simplify in one direction or the other. And whether he deals with contemplation or with conduct, that is what S. John is always doing: hence like nature he seems monotonous and proves inexhaustible.

And finally this ardour of imagination elucidates his language about the world. In Epistle as in Gospel we are confined within the boundaries of a great contention. The Gospel shews the Lord Jesus opposed by the Jews: the Epistle shews the brotherhood as a little company in the midst of a hostile world. That is just what the church in Ephesus must have been in the first century, and it is very possible that S. John's picture

of the Lord and his disciples in Jerusalem is coloured by his long Ephesian episcopate, which, we must always remember, was still filled for him with the presence of his Lord: Ephesus was the new "mansion" for him in which the Lord had promised to be with him, and the Lord shared with him the perpetual hostility of the world. Now this confinement within the walls of a fighting place, both in Gospel and Epistle, is part and parcel of S. John's sacramental grasp of life. It is the concrete reality which enables him to reach downwards and inwards to the eternal reality. That reach extends into the widest freedom of possibilities. And the limitation is the condition of intimacy and concentrated peace courage love. Within the limiting space the Lord is closely joined to his disciples, the apostle to the brethren. He says much of love between the brethren: of the world he says that it lieth in the evil one; "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one" (v, 19). That has an awful sound as of utter hopelessness. But it was a statement of visible fact, and to S. John the statement of visible fact was the starting point for eternal possibilities. Let me make bold to tell you a piece of private history. During a quiet day at King's College, London, I heard the first Epistle of S. John read through during the breakfast hour. When it was finished I felt that for

the first time I understood its severity aright. These terrible sentences about the world were co-ordinate with the beautiful sayings about love. Neither were without an intensity of passion. Both meant that the invincible love of God, working through the self-effacing discipline of the Saviour's church, was destined to win the whole world. The pathos of a hitherto abandoned world was the justification of an organised church. S. John has told us, what the earlier evangelists did not explicitly reveal, that "Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John ii, 2).

## LECTURE III.

### THE APOCALYPSE.

We have had to compare S. John several times with the Synoptists as the first three evangelists are called. For all the depth of S. John we do return with fresh delight to those three Galilean Gospels. How calm and gentle they are, healthful as a summer sky. And yet when we study them more closely other characteristics appear. Do you remember what Dr. Burkitt said of S. Mark? How, until our eyes become accustomed to the atmosphere we hardly recognise the Lord Jesus of our gentle unindividualised convention in the stormy and mysterious person who moves across his pages? He calls to repentance, sternly rebukes the cruel hearted, is approached with awe, dies a tragic death, giving his life a ransom for many, and the women, when they heard that he was risen, "fled from the tomb . . . for they were afraid."

Yet all this might seem for a long while to be alien to the general spirit of the New Testament. Troubles indeed thwart the advancing faith. Stephen is martyred. Fightings within and fears without beset S. Paul. Yet the quiet joy\* of his imprisonment sets the key ;

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\* cf. Acts xxviii 30f with Phil, 1, 25, iv, 4-7.



and it is on the whole the joy of success. The entrance of the Gentiles was opposed, but in the end the Gentiles were welcomed. The Acts tells the story of an apostolic mission swiftly extended under the security of Roman law and order. Only in some later books we begin to hear the threatenings of storm. The hope of quiet progress is after all to be interrupted. And in the Apocalypse this disappointment culminates.

“I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet . . . and I saw one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me saying, ‘Fear not; I am the first and the

last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of hell ' ' (i, 9ff). You see, the stormy and mysterious person appears again to help his servants in their time of need. He had prepared for this from the first. Quiet progress was not enough for the perfecting of faith. The peace of the church was proved by trial before the creative apostolic period could end. It is within the sternest realities of history that the grander certainties of divine reality are discovered.

Here is the sacramental principle again. It runs all through these Johannine writings. It is not a proof of common authorship, but it does mark a certain community in thought and worship. It is this community which allows us to style these writings the Ephesian Canon or the Ephesian Gospel. Community in worship is always a powerful influence. It produces a kind of instinct which may be shared by very different men. We will leave the few critical remarks which may have to be made about this book to the end. Here we will just notice that its language and in many respects its thought are not quite the same as in the Gospel and Epistles, and that the John of the Apocalypse may perhaps be another person from the author of those books. He was a thinker, this John is much more of a ritualist. The ritual character of the vision is marked. It begins with the

letters to the seven churches, a term never used of the brotherhood in the first Epistle. Then the seer is taken up into heaven and heaven is a place of ceaseless worship, containing a temple (xi, 19). True, the temple or shrine is, as Archbishop Benson points out, so unimportant in comparison with the presence of God that the seer scarcely notices it at first. But that shews what a good ritualist he was. The presence of God is the heart and meaning of worship; and the Apocalypse asserts this throughout. In the hour of apocalyptic trial this is proved. When violence and blasphemy dominate on earth, the throne of God and of the Lamb are really found in heaven.

Notice too how liturgic in the strict sense of the word this worship is. As in the Epistle to the Hebrews, so here; the angels are liturgic spirits continually being sent forth from the ritual presence of God to do ministering service for His people. Worship has a twofold potency. It lifts the worshipper into supernal peace, and it sends him forth with confidence into terrestrial strife; he is, as it were, in two regions and yet these are ultimately one; and in each he is freed from anxiety because self is transmuted in the consciousness of God.

The Apocalypse was written for Christians in a fiery trial. It was to them what Daniel was to the Maccabean covenanters in the

persecution of Antiochus. Think of the vision in Daniel vii: the brute beasts of worldly empire pushing and destroying: the mist clears away and the Ancient of Days is visible in heaven with his angelic host; the judgement is set, and the books are opened. Again the mist gathers and the world war closes on the spectator. But it issues in the failure of prepotent evil, and once more the air is clear, bright heaven is discovered, and one like a son of man receives his eternal kingdom for the saints of the most high. Then think what it must have been for the Christians trembling at the irresistible force of the Roman empire to lift up their eyes to the throne of God and the Lamb, and the sea of glass, and the happy saints, and the unalterable order of eternal praise, and to hear the angelic hymns which their own eucharistic service echoed on earth:

“And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice,

Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the

earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying,

Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.

And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped" (v, 11ff).

A person in a certain nineteenth century novel hears language like this in church, comes out, walks up the village street, and sees the butcher killing a real lamb, as the author puts it with a brutal frankness meant to make us re-examine our sincerity. There is an etching by Mr. Strang of the procession to Calvary. Forsaking the pomp of artistic tradition, he has drawn a half-dozen shabby provincial soldiers conducting Christ with two miserable bandits. Two slatternly women watch them passing from the window of a house. Two or three boys stare at them in the road. Again we are compelled to examine our sincerity. Perhaps Mr. Strang exaggerates in his reaction. But the exaggeration is towards the historical fact. Can we bear to think of such a real Lamb of God as this when we repeat the consecrated phrase? The martyrs might have found it easier: perhaps the martyrdom of war has made it easier for not a few in these days. For look at the etching again. Look long and steadily

at the face of the Lord, then ask yourself whether it does not tell you something of his redeeming power which you had hardly learned from all the glories of the renaissance masters.

That touch is to be felt throughout the Apocalypse. "I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore," says the majestic Christ at the beginning of the vision. "Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah," said the elder to the seer. "And I beheld, and lo, a Lamb as it had been slain." This title "The Lamb," says Lightfoot in his sermon on "The wrath of the Lamb," is reiterated in the Apocalypse nearly thirty times. "This novel contradiction lies at the root of the Gospel. The life of Christ was from first to last a paradox. His weakness was power; His shame was honour; His death was victory. The lamb, not the lion, is the true symbol of our faith. This is plainly the leading idea in the Apocalypse. Whatever of greatness and whatever of power the seer would ascribe to his risen Lord finds its reason, its justification, its fulfilment in this one title. Is it victorious might? 'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them.' Is it divine illumination? 'The glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof.' Is it adoration and worship? 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom,

and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' Lastly, is it vengeance? Here is the climax of the paradox. It is not the wrath of the Lion, but the wrath of the Lamb, which is so terrible in the seer's vision" (*Cambridge Sermons*, pp. 198f). It was his Lord as Son of man that S. Stephen saw standing up to save him, not from death but through death. "Come, Lord Jesus," is S. John's prayer for the final advent: he would see his Lord in lowly manhood when he sees him as he is. To S. Paul he is "the crucified;" still bearing the marks of the passion; and all through the New Testament the idea rules, life through death, victory through defeat, glory in humiliation.

So it does in history. Of the seven churches Smyrna and Philadelphia are unreservedly praised, and these are distinguished by tribulation, poverty, and "little power." Athens in her decline and fall bequeathed philosophy, or ardour for intellectual truth, to the world. The Byzantine empire retrieved its fame and saved civilisation for Europe by perishing in the defence. The sword-won victory of the Maccabees soon degenerated into mean politics, but the faith of Judaism which had sprung out of the fall of Jerusalem flowered in the fulness of the times into the Gospel; and in the new birth Judaism died. "Sir, we would see Jesus," said the Greeks, in S. John's Gospel. And the answer of the

Lord was, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be." (John xii, 24 ff.)

Judaism died in giving birth to Christianity. But S. Paul refused to accept the dying as an end of life: "A hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved. . . . O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. xi, 25f, 33). What he declared as dogma, is displayed in the Apocalypse as visionary fact. After the hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel are numbered and sealed the fruit of Israel's immortal death is witnessed:

"After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (vii, 9f).

Israel is, in that "Lord's day" into



which S. John had been rapt in the Spirit, sealed and complete, and with Israel are the nations that throng the market of Ephesus and knew not Christ and slew his servants. There is no separation any longer between Jew and Gentile. Counting by nations we behold all thronging to the altar throne of the Lamb—in the meadow, numberless, as Van Eyck has painted them.

But in the Apocalypse the counting is not by nations and by masses. Here too the Johannine priestly care for the several souls appears. S. Paul speaks of some few who have fallen asleep in Christ, and would himself fain depart and be with Christ. But years passed and many lives of Christians passed with the lengthening years, and now martyrdom is a common fate.

“And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled” (vi, 9ff).

As always, the age of martyrdom is the age of deepening faith in the indissoluble eternal life, and in the communion of saints.

“And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : yea, saith the Spirit, may they rest from their labours ; for their works follow with them ” (xiv, 13.)

As the vision revealed the unity of earth with the ceaseless liturgy of heaven, so to those still whelmed in the great tribulation was their fellowship assured with those who day by day passed out of the great tribulation, who washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.

“Therefore are they before the throne of God ; and they serve him day and night in his temple : and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat : for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life : and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes ” (vii, 15ff).

The great tribulation : that is what gave rise to, and perpetually restores the sincerity of the hymn which in the earthly eucharist is offered up “ with angels and archangels and

with all the company of heaven" who stand by the crystal sea, having harps of God. "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest" (xv, 3f).

Again, this is the doctrine of the Gospel and Epistle brought out into visionary, but actual life. These things are, while the drama of good and evil still runs its course on earth. These things are; and S. John has seen them. Yet they are seen as in a vision. S. John is in the Spirit, and sees not with the eyes of the flesh. It is startling to find this third division of the Johannine canon so utterly different from the rest in its frank use of imagery.

And yet again, how good that it should be so. We may not strictly speak of "another world," for it is within the earthly that we, of earth, must always reach the heavenly. But does that mean that the patterns in the heavens are continuations of the copies on earth; that for instance, since personality is the highest term in which we can conceive

life, persons we shall ever be, as now, but with extended faculties of personality? Or should we rather think that while the copy partakes of the reality of the pattern it can never by continuation or extension pass over into another kind, and when God shall be "all in all," our highest conceptions of reality must be recreated by some absolute goodness quite beyond our ken as yet? "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard"—well, at least the apocalyptic imagery, by its bold imperfection, its elusive splendour, keeps the way open for the absolute, if haply the way of the absolute should prove to be the meeting point of our constructive parallels.

Nevertheless the Apocalypse of S. John is "other worldly" in the best sense. This world is certainly not despaired of in it. It is into this world to make it new that the heavenly city descends. And the voice which heralds the descent, says, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them." That seems the ultimate promise of the vision, which ends—but where precisely does it end? In Chapter xxi S. John tells that he saw the holy city descend. He goes on (verse 9) to tell how he saw this and just what he saw. He passes from outward to inward description, and his words swell into a prophet's hymn which culminates in xxii, 5, "And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun;

for the Lord God shall give them light : and they shall reign for ever and ever." Then the angel who conducts him seems to speak, but before we have listened to more than a few sentences we perceive that the angel has retired, at least into silence, and John is with the Lord Jesus, as at the opening of the vision in Chapter i—"And he said unto me, these words are faithful and true : and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass. And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." Then it would seem that the seer is about to close with a farewell assurance of his trustworthiness in the marvellous record he has given us. "And I John am he that heard and saw these things." But by "these things" he means these last things I have just now told you. For he continues, "And when I heard and saw I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things." That worship forbidden, once more the Lord Jesus speaks, and it is not easy to decide where his speech ends ; whether John himself interpolates something or whether he simply listens till he answers the final "Yea : I come quickly," with "Amen : Come, Lord Jesus."

If this is not faithful recollection, it is accomplished art. Just in this manner does

one wake gradually from a vivid dream ; and just in this manner, we may suppose, a divinely ordained trance might end ; the seer gradually returning from "the Lord's day," and all the tremendous scenes at which he has assisted, to ordinary life.

And throughout the vision itself something of the same character may be observed. The things shewn are things shortly to come to pass. They are the last act of that "last time" which began with the Lord's victory through death. They all belong to that "Lord's day," the advent day, the day of judgement, the consummation of all history, which summed up the Christian hope. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," was the church's prayer. In this Apocalypse the answer to that prayer is revealed. But have we ever tried to imagine what kind of life that expected day will introduce ? If so, have we not experienced the inadequacy of any faculty we possess for such imagining ? The end of strife with evil : blessedness indeed. But how then shall anything we know as life go on ? This imbecility is I suppose universal and it at least affords some reason for the doubt I expressed a little while ago whether the simplicity, so much in vogue, of speculating on a "life to come" in terms of present experience can be profitable. An alternative is to deny that an "end" ever comes. If time is to continue into eternity.

there can be no "end" to strife. The Apocalypse passes by both alternatives. Its bold imagery commits us to nothing about the nature of the reality which lies beyond its symbols; except indeed that God's good will is ultimate. It points to the "end" but never brings it into view. Again and again it seems to be arriving. Again and again there is an interruption, and the drama unrolls itself anew. At each point of resumption the end is nearer. Still it never bursts upon our gaze. And the last words are still a promise and a prayer: "Yea, I come quickly. Amen: Come, Lord Jesus." That does not mean there can be no end. It does mean that what such an absolute end shall really be lies beyond human comprehension. Flaubert's apothegm might be a reverent comment on the Apocalypse: "Reality is always misrepresented by those who wish to make it lead up to a conclusion: God alone may do that."

It has been conjectured by some that xxii, 18f are a later addition to the peaceful conclusion. This is mere conjecture. There is no hint in manuscripts, versions or quotations of disturbance in the text. We may wish it were otherwise, but a wish is no argument, and the stern interruption is only too much in the style of the author. I say "too much," for there are passages in the book which not only run counter to modern

taste, but really do belong to their own time rather than to all time. Do not many readers skip chapters xii and xiii, feeling that they spoil the interest as well as the beauty of the developing action? It is a pity to skip what certainly is an essential part of the whole. But the excuse is that these two chapters reproduce without creative transmutation the features of Jewish apocalypses, works popular when this book appeared but tedious now.

But besides those chapters there are other places in which the wrath of God, though it be the wrath of the Lamb, is expressed in language too like the language of "the fierce Tertullian." "And the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day and night." I need not collect quotations. Every one remembers, and few but are troubled by these passages. Of course they are imagery, and as with the beatific imagery, so with this: it must be taken as adumbrating what cannot be fully expressed. What it adumbrates is the reality of the battle between good and evil, the severity of God's love which still ceases not to be perfect love and love for all his creatures. Remember those words in 2 Esdras (vii 57f, viii 47): "This is the condition of the battle, which man that is born upon the earth shall fight; that if he be overcome he shall suffer as thou hast said: but



if he get the victory, he shall receive the thing that I say. . . . For thou comest far short that thou shouldest be able to love my creature more than I." And we should remember too that the phrase "for ever" is taken over from the Old Testament and the uncanonical Jewish writings. It is literally "for the age" or "for the ages." It is used hundreds of times with almost a hundred shades of significance. When we harden it into an epithet to fix the duration of "punishment" in unending time, we are contracting Scripture to a human scheme.

More might be said to like effect. Yet the feeling will persist that it does not satisfy, that the author did mean something which cannot be subsumed entirely under the breadth of God's pure love. As with Tertullian, so with him; there is plenty of excuse for this. Both lived through a period of horrid violence when Christ seemed to have left the world. The Apocalypse declares with a trumpet blast of certainty that he has not and never does leave the world; that in the most fearful hours he is most near. But things have been done which to the seer seem past cure and past forgiveness. Now the Christian faith insists on absolute forgiveness of the worst injuries, and when this book was at last admitted into the Christian canon it was on the understanding that none of these hard passages should be accepted by the Church

except with some such interpretation as I have tried to sketch above. What chiefly offended the early Church was the "millenarian" passages, the too material representation, as it seemed, of the advent blessedness. I have rather suggested that this materialistic reading of his imagery was never intended by the author, and that for all his frank and antique style he too, like the Gospel and Epistle, refined on the traditional hope. At any rate, when at last the book was universally received some such interpretation of the perplexing chapters was recognised as allowable. That was the condition of acceptance. And when in a later age a like difficulty arises about the penal imagery, a like allowance must be admitted. The Apocalypse is received by the church of all places and all ages to express her whole mind magnificently, rather than to establish prosaically every peculiarity of its long disputed author.

For it was disputed in the early church, though in curiously modern fashion. Critical doubts were raised against a book which would seem to have been at first accepted. In the west we find it widely known and used during the second century, though the early Roman list, the Muratorian Canon, notices that some rejected it. Half-way through the century Justin Martyr refers to it as written by John the apostle. The Apocalypse is the first of the Johannine books to receive this direct

attestation. But half-way through the third century Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, made the very obvious objection that the Greek style of the Apocalypse is so different from the Greek of the Gospel and the Epistles that he could not believe them to come from the same pen. He therefore held that the Gospel and Epistles were by the apostle and the Apocalypse by another John. And he fortified his opinion by the statement (which lacks confirmation) that two graves in Ephesus bore the name of John. In the west when the book was read in a translation the argument from Greek style made no impression and the church continued to count the apostle author of all the books alike. In the east the argument was almost unanswerable. It was reinforced by dislike of the millenarian prophecies, and for two centuries the prejudice against the book was so great that it was omitted in the early Syrian version, and was at least unpopular everywhere: Eusebius puts it among the disputed books, and early Greek texts were rare.

But Eusebius goes a step further in critical conjecture than Dionysius. He accepts Dionysius' theory of two Johns, and applies it to a tradition he has preserved of Papias in which "John the presbyter" seems to be distinguished from John the apostle. John the presbyter, says Eusebius, is Dionysius' second John and no doubt it was John

the presbyter who wrote the Apocalypse. This John the presbyter has played a conspicuous part in modern criticism. The fragment of Papias which speaks of him is combined with another Papias fragment which seems to tell of the apostle's early martyrdom. The silence of the first half of the second century about the apostle being in Asia at all is then pressed, and the whole tradition about John the apostle in Ephesus is shifted to John the presbyter. Thus Moffatt decides that John the presbyter wrote the Apocalypse. The two short Epistles, from "the presbyter" are also his: the Gospel and the first Epistle are however from two unknown members of the Ephesian school.

It is as difficult to believe that one and the same person wrote the Apocalypse and 2 and 3 John as it was for Dionysius to believe that the Gospel and the Apocalypse were by the same writer. The Papias fragment, preserved by a ninth century Greek writer, is now supported by the discovery of a still shorter Papias quotation from a writer of the seventh or eighth centuries. If this late attestation be deemed quite trustworthy it is still worth noticing that these fragments tell us only that John was killed by the Jews, not that he was killed in early life by the Jews, and indeed the statement looks suspiciously like an inference from our Lord's answer to the

mother of James and John (Mark x, 39, Matt. xx, 23). We have already considered a possible explanation of the early silence about St. John's "quiet apostolate." That explanation fits in fairly well with Dom Chapman's simple interpretation of Papias' language about John the presbyter.\* Papias first speaks of "presbyters" from whom he himself learned what the "disciples of the Lord" had said. These presbyters are men who have known the "disciples" but have not themselves known the Lord. The "disciples" are the apostles who have known the Lord; their names are given, and John is among them. Then Papias speaks of Aristion and "the presbyter John" as "disciples of the Lord" who are still saying things which he learns from his "presbyters." There is no need to emend the text in any way. The point is in the tenses of the two verbs. The other "disciples of the Lord" had passed away and spoke no longer: Aristion and John still live and still speak. That there may be no doubt about the John who is associated with Aristion being the same John as has just been named among the apostles, Papias adds in his second mention of him the title by which, as 2 and 3 John shew, he was commonly known. "The presbyters" were the old men known to Papias, who had known the apostles: "the presbyter" is the unassuming title by which

\*John the Presbyter and the fourth Gospel, by Dom John Chapman, O.S.B., Oxford, 1911.

the last surviving apostle was honoured at Ephesus.

This is inconsistent with the early martyrdom. The evidence for the early martyrdom is far from irrefragable. Dom Chapman's argument is plausible; to me almost convincing. But so is Dionysius of Alexandria. The one John cannot have written both Gospel and Apocalypse. Whether the Apocalypse belongs to the reign of Domitian, as Irenaeus said, or to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as Hort so nearly proves, either interval will be too short to bridge the difference between the magnificent but barbarous Greek of the Apocalypse and the Gospel which is indeed elementary in syntax but so fluent, so natural. But then again it seems likely that the writer of the Gospel is not himself the beloved disciple whose memoirs he is writing out. Hence it would seem quite reasonable to suppose that the beloved disciple is S. John, the "presbyter" or "patriarch" of Ephesus. His Gospel and Epistles have been composed by a pupil. But the Apocalypse may be his own vision written by his own pen. And yet there is a difference of thought as well as of style in the Apocalypse, and we may admit, with Dr. Swete, the possibility that it comes from another author. He might be another John: that there should be two inspired apostolic men of that name is not too strange. Still

the impression the book leaves is that we are intended to accept its John as the apostle. If so, we might suppose some unnamed writer to be founding an apocalyptic composition of his own on a traditional vision of the apostle. Or he may have dignified an independent work with the name of a hero of the church: for such had been the recognised apocalyptic convention in the past.

Yet it had never been the custom to adopt the name of a still living person, and this conjecture brings us round once more to face the possibility that John the apostle had passed to his rest, "killed by the Jews" or by some other fate, before any of these books were written. Some later Plato devoted to the memory of this Socrates has recorded his master's teaching as faithfully as Plato but as daringly. That would make many things easier, the raising of Lazarus for instance. Some of you will understand me if I say it is the very easiness which gives one pause. The very difficulties of reverence, in creeds, in the problem of Gospel miracles or of the person of Christ, seem at first to cramp the intellect, but presently prove an impulse to deeper freedom. Infinite range is emptiness at last.

Nevertheless the critical problem of the Johannine writings is very complicated. It would need more than one whole lecture to

set out the objections to the traditional view with candour. To come to a thoroughly reasoned decision on the questions is far beyond the scope of these three short lectures. I do not profess to do more than offer such a sketch as may justify the tentative opinion, the working hypothesis, I have adopted. I am deeply impressed by the fine theology which the Dean of St. Paul's has educed from the Gospel by taking it as a second century, and (so to say) romantic composition,\* and I feel that when it is set against the traditional background much that needs explaining has to be left unexplained. But then again I remember that this kind of dimness must surround all ancient books, and that, until tradition is proved erroneous, it ought to be admitted as part of the whole evidence. But let no reader of the few pages here devoted to the critical enquiry mistake their sketchiness for dogmatism. In the Johannine problem there is no room as yet for that.

And whatever be the final satisfying answer to critical enquiry, the appeal to the beloved disciple, the confident use of the name John in the Apocalypse, and the catholic judgement of the church which has admitted all these books into the canon of inspired Scripture without defining the mode of inspiration, guarantees their trustworthiness for all our real needs. Let us briefly gather up the



main lessons we have selected in these lectures out of the large variety of their doctrine.

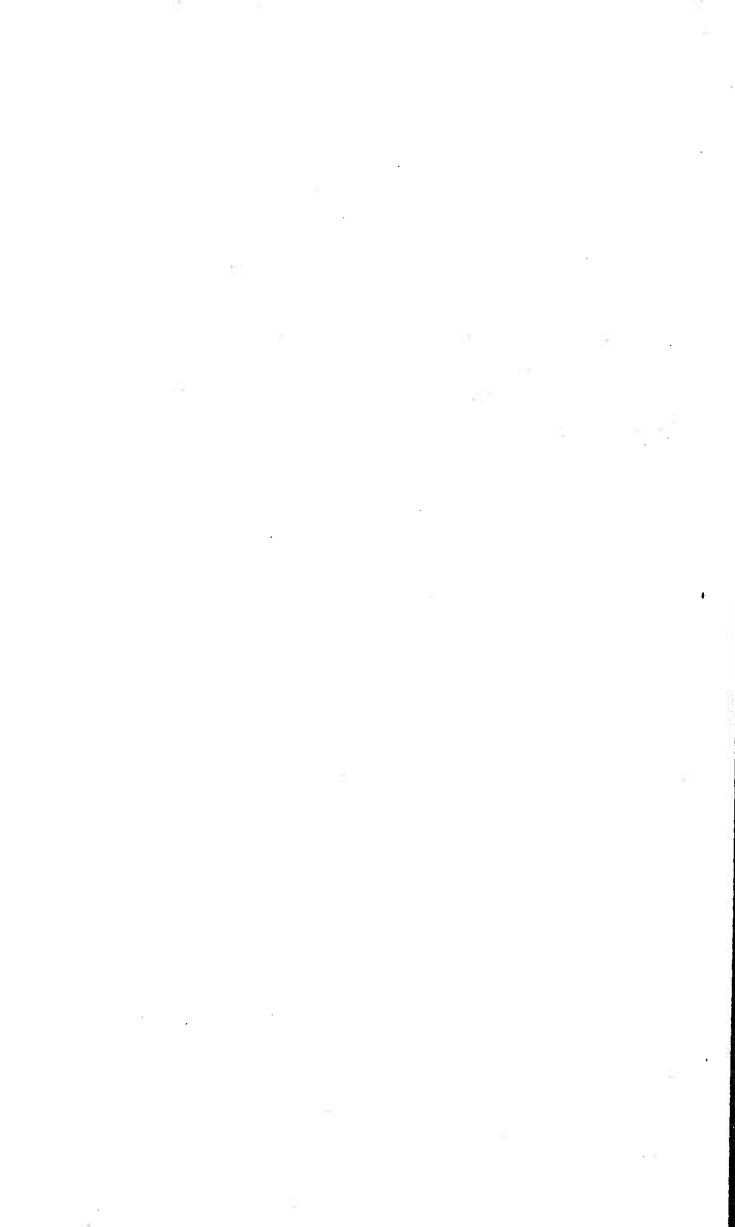
The Gospel bids us accept boldly the fullest confession of our Lord's godhead. But it does this by shewing at the same time his true manhood with limitations, humiliations, concrete affections. These are the sacramental vehicles of godhead. We see the Galilean in all his simplicity, and we shrink from admitting that in such simplicity so vast a work of God and through God could have been done. But our shrinking comes from our not claiming enough for faith. Jesus Christ is God, is but an inadequate human formula for a truth so tremendous that no formula can comprehend it. S. John with his doctrine of the Word, and his inclusion of all disciples in the divine Master, and all that lives within the Word, helps us to expand our theological imagination.

The Epistle treats of love of the brethren, of Christian economics, which in his hands soon become Christian heroics. For here is the incarnation of the Word displayed in the generosity of men's intercourse with one another. This would teach us not to be discouraged if, as perhaps it is to-day, we see the love of the brethren more enthusiastically and systematically progressing without than within the church. This may be the preparation for a larger, and a more united church. We are waiting in these days for the idea of

the one church to descend anew upon us, as once it descended on S. Paul at Rome when the fightings and fears of his missionary labour were abated. Our fears and fightings will abate as we join more and more liberally in the common enterprise of Christian charity. And therein too is a formative discipline for our theology. In this fresh manifestation of Christ in many brethren our conception of Christ's person may expand.

From the Apocalypse we learn that in catastrophic triumphs of evil the advance of faith is not checked, though the steadiness of the advance is interrupted. When things are at the worst Christ does not depart; he "comes." Then the paradox of his Person is most intelligible; the reality that underlies life, the indefectible peace is rendered apparent. "I am the life," says the Gospel. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren," says the Epistle. "He that loses life for my sake and the good tidings, finds it," says the Apocalypse. The student of S. John has no wish to supersede creeds. He understands the creeds better because he gains the habit of translating their difficult sublimities into the Johannine elements, life light love. We can only know those elements as yet in strife with their opposites, death darkness hate. But we continually see this strife issuing in the transubstantiation of death, darkness or hate

into life, light, love. We see this in the Gospel record whenever our Lord intervenes : in S. John's Gospel this is pointedly indicated. And in history and contemporary events we see the same transformation when anyone who is in any degree Christlike sacrifices himself. And so continually the Word re-clothes himself with flesh, and the purpose of the incarnation, the taking up of manhood into God, goes forward.



## AIDS TO STUDY.

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The New Testament should be read in the true ancient text. The Greek is best found in the edition of Westcott and Hort (Macmillan 4/6), a note at the end of which explains the principles upon which the ancient text is recovered, and the reasons for rejecting the so called Received Text upon which our AV is based. In English RV should be used because, apart from the question of translation, it represents the ancient text, and study will soon shew how important this is for true doctrine. Souter's *Greek Text used by the Revisers* (Oxford 3/6) gives a selection of various readings from the chief MSS., versions, and fathers, most useful to all who care to go further into the history of the text.

Moffatt has written an *Introduction to the literature of the New Testament* (Clark 12/-) with abundant lists of books; indispensable for critical study. His earlier *Historical New Testament*, with its introduction, tables of events and early literature, canonical catalogues &c., and its original translation of N.T. arranged in chronological order, is a delightful companion. Zahn's *Introduction* (translated from the third German edition) sets forth the conservative view with powerful

erudition. Bacon's short *Introduction* (Macmillan) is clever, readable. He has also published an elaborate discussion of the Johannine writings, *The Fourth Gospel in research and debate* (New York), which should be checked by the more conservative enquiry of Stanton, *The Gospels as historical documents* (Cambridge 2 vols.) a solid, judicial work often referred to by Bacon himself with deserved respect. The article in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible on Gospels* is by Stanton. In *Encyclopædia Biblica* Schmiedel writes of the fourth Gospel in the article on *John, son of Zebedee*; E. A. Abbott in the article on *Gospels*. H. Latimer Jackson's *Problem of the fourth Gospel* is a good summary of the critical arguments (Cambridge, 1918, 6/-).

Abbott claims special attention, for he has sought to reach the heart of this Gospel in his four volumes on *The fourfold Gospel* (Cambridge), patient, learned, penetrating and original. Those who will not read the four large volumes may get the gist of them from the small *Introduction*. Other books about the Gospel, or the Johannine writings in general, which will be found useful are Drummond, *Character and authorship of the fourth Gospel* (Scribner), and Sanday, *The Criticism of the fourth Gospel* (Oxford), reviewing the critical problem and confirming a moderate conservatism: essays by Inge and Brooke in *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, Inge treating the Gospel

as pure theology, Brooke as history: E. F. Scott, *The fourth Gospel, its purpose and theology* (Clark): Gardner, *The Ephesian Gospel* (Williams and Norgate): DuBose, *The reason of life* (Longmans), one of four small books in which Dr. DuBose interprets the groups of N.T. theology for the mind of this generation. But far the greatest of these interpretations is Hort's *The Way, the Truth and the Life* (Macmillan 6/-), a golden treasury of Christian philosophy expressed in simple language with profound thought; the argument requires close attention, which is made easier by the prefixed analysis. Mention may also be made of a sermon by Dr. Hort on *St. John the Evangelist in Cambridge and other Sermons* (Macmillan 4/6) in which he tells the story, with charming lucidity, of S. John's life work and literary production as he, after prolonged study, pictured it.

A very readable, and of course scholarly, little book is Burkitt's *Two Lectures on the Gospels* (Macmillan), with which Matthew Arnold's *God and the Bible* (Smith, Elder 2/6) may be associated. In both S. John is considered rather as author than as writer of the Gospel, a view which is perhaps accordant with ecclesiastical tradition. And in von Soden's *History of Christian Literature* (Williams and Norgate, English translation) the chapter on the Johannine literature is vigorous and interesting.

Abraham's *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (Cambridge, 1917) contains notes on S. John's Gospel which illustrate and confirm the old opinion, now reviving in a more disciplined form, that the background of thought and narrative is largely Jewish.

Westcott has written commentaries on the *Gospel* (Murray) and the *Epistles* (Macmillan) which no advancing fashions in criticism will supersede. Loisy's *Le quatrième Évangile* (Paris, 1903, but now out of print) is a monument of the best "modernist" scholarship and piety. Brooke's *Epistles*, in Clark's *International Critical Commentaries*, is valuable; his notes on S. John's eschatology are of great interest. F. D. Maurice composed expository commentaries on the *Gospel*, *First Epistle*, and *Apocalypse*, the first two of which may still be bought in Macmillan's 3/6 series. These expositions effected a conversion in the mind of his generation, the effects of which have so worked themselves into succeeding generations that we read the sentences almost as commonplace. But they are far from commonplace; and the treatment of the Epistle is impressive, so near akin is S. John's love of the brethren to Maurice's idea of social reform.

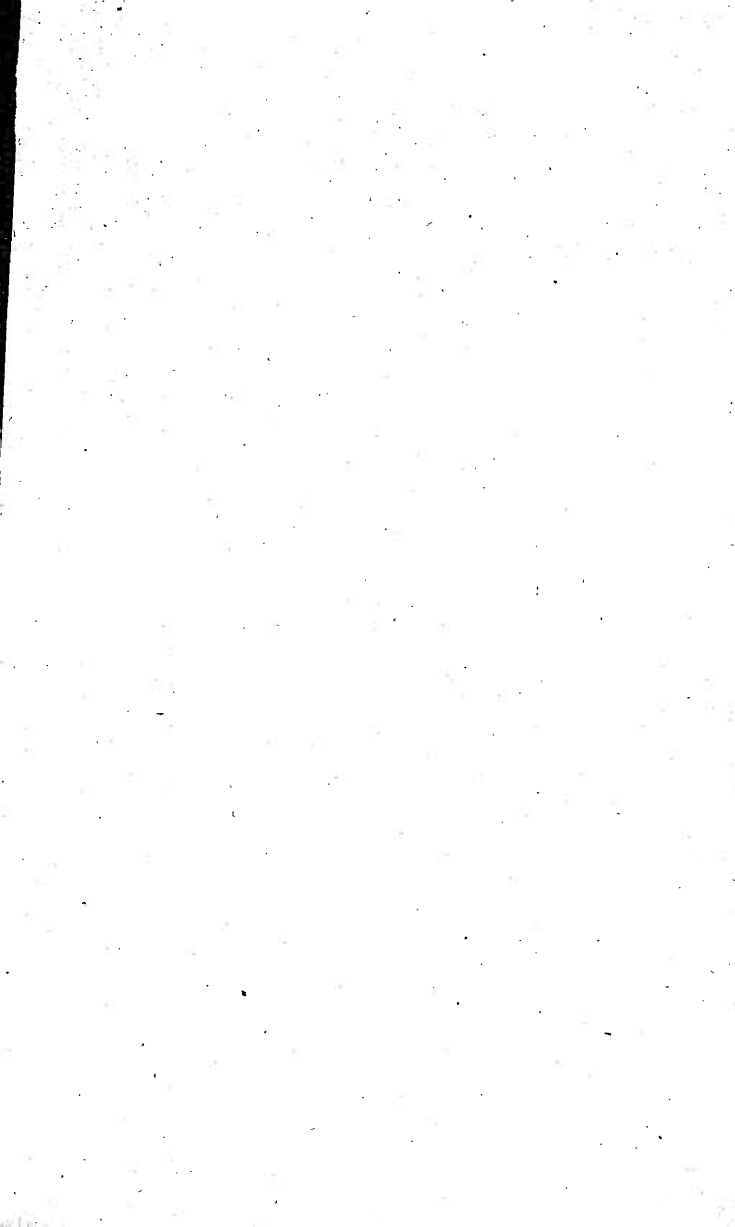
Bousset, who wrote the article *Apocalypse* in *Encyclopædia Biblica*, is the author of a *Kritisch-exegetisch Kommentar* on the Apocalypse in which he brings to a focus the labours



of previous writers such as Wiezsäcker and Gunkel. Gunkel's *Schöpfung und Chaos* (Göttingen, 1895) should be read by all who care to trace the apocalyptic ideas to their sources, and to understand how deeply interfused with the earliest Hebrew religion is the hope of a Saviour to come. Very different, but certainly not less inspiring, is Archbishop Benson's *Apocalypse* (Macmillan 8/6) the work—almost the visionary dream—of a theologian brought up on the tragic drama of Hellas and himself on fire with imagination. The editing of this book by Miss Margaret Benson is nearly as wonderful as its original conception. Dr. Swete scarcely notices it in his *Commentary* (Macmillan, 1916); his own genius led him in quite another direction. That of course does not detract from the excellence of this great book. In its exquisite scholarship it is a relic of a lost art. And that is perhaps the least of its merits. Dr. Swete also wrote the article on *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* in the revised edition of the *Cambridge Companion to Biblical Studies* (Cambridge, 1916), an article which shews that his outlook was becoming larger, and his touch more sure, to the last.

Excellent small commentaries have been written on the Gospel and Epistles by Dr. A. Plummer in the *Cambridge Bible* (3/-, 2/-), and the *Cambridge Greek Testament* (6/-, 4/-), for Schools and Colleges.

A Commentary on the Apocalypse is promised in the *International Critical Commentaries* by Dr. R. H. Charles, who has already published *Studies in the Apocalypse* (T. and T. Clark, 4/6), and *An attempt to recover the original order of the text of Rev. xx* (Milford for British Academy, 1/-). His *Eschatology* (Black) and Ramsay's *Letters to the Seven Churches* (Hodder and Stoughton) are important for the light they throw on the theological and historical background of the Apocalypse. The best popular Commentary is Anderson Scott's in the Century Bible.



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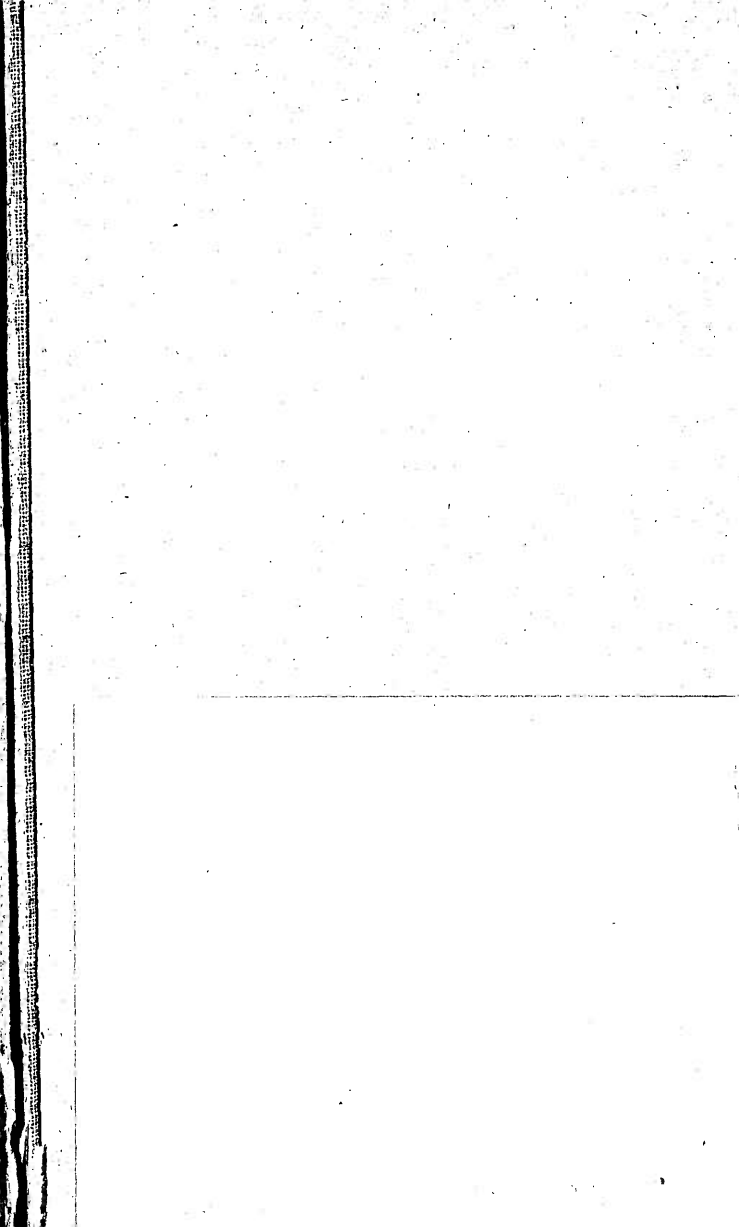
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